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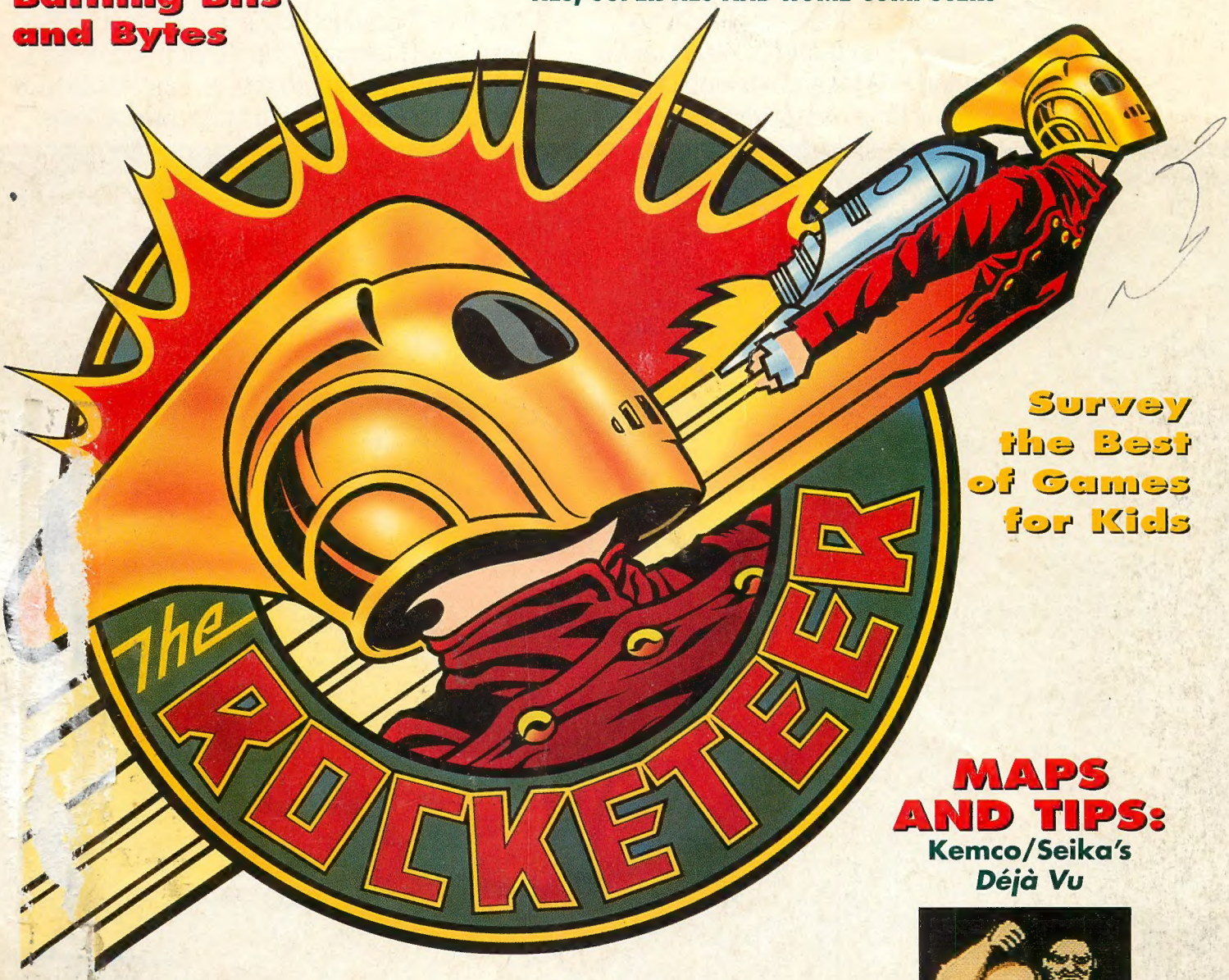
September 1991

ROCKETEER

VG&CE LOOKS AT THE MOVIE HERO'S MOVE TO THE NES, SUPER NES AND HOME COMPUTERS

IN THE TRENCHES:

Battling Bits and Bytes



Survey the Best of Games for Kids

MAPS AND TIPS:

Kemco/Seika's *Déjà Vu*

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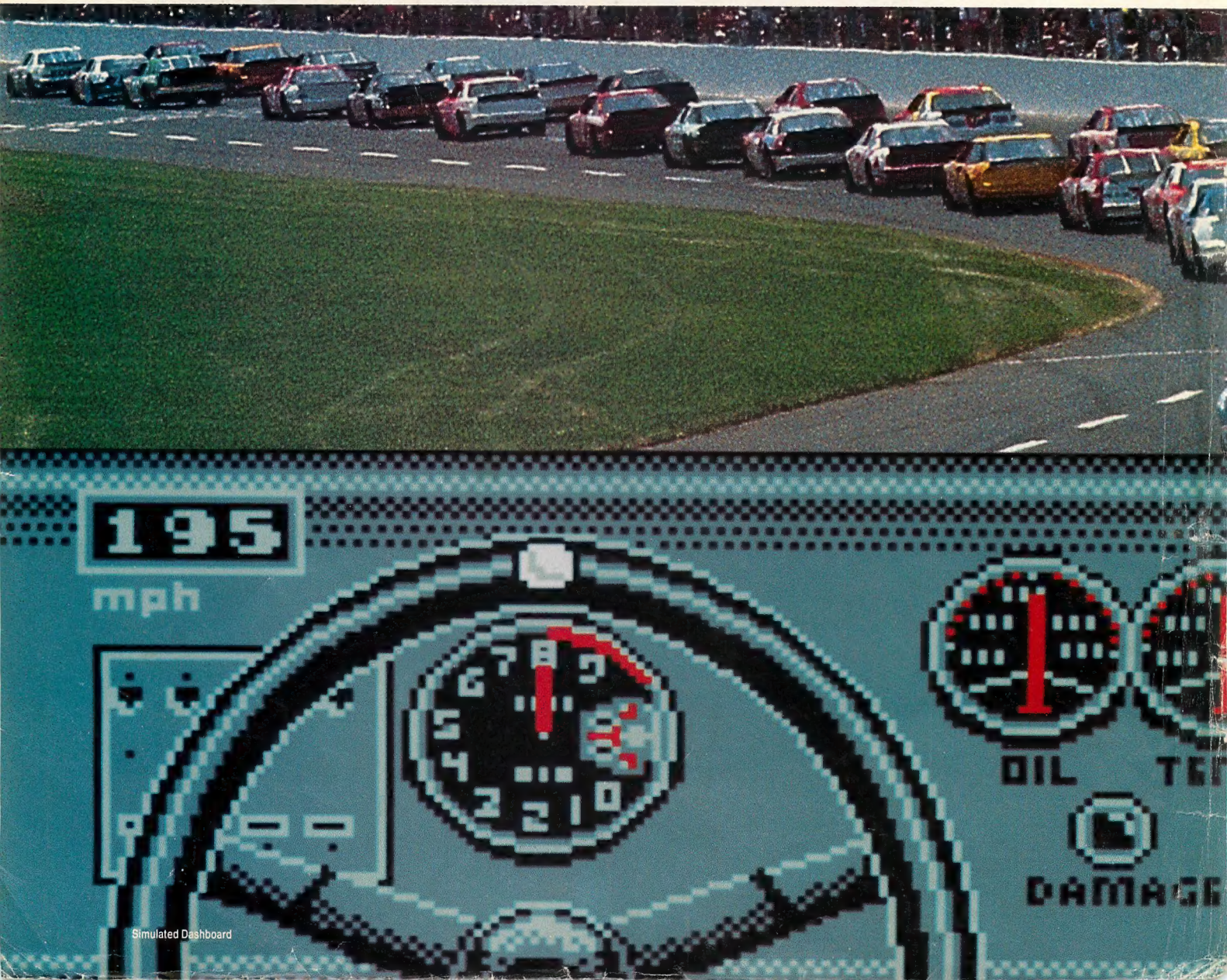

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CIRCLE #102 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Cover: *The Rocketeer*, this summer's box office hit, has made its way from the silver screen to the video-game screen. Turn to page 58 for a detailed preview of all the available games.
Cover Art: The Rocketeer
© The Walt Disney Company.

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EDITOR

If you are a careful reader who pays close attention to the scribing in VG&CE, you'll probably notice a few different names on the masthead to the left of this column. First, we'd like to welcome Brian Spielvogel to the ranks—actually, a change of ranks. Brian moves from our advertising production department into the Assistant Art Director shoes. Good luck, Brian.

Another addition you might have noticed are a pair of Contributing Editors from overseas. Last month I noted that Donn Nauert and I had just returned from Tokyo, and out of that journey came the beginnings of a nice relationship with one of Japan's biggest magazine publishers, Shogakukan. Shogakukan is one of the people responsible for *PC Engine Monthly* magazine. On the other side of the world, we have also created a strong bond with EMAP Images, publishers of *Computer & Video Games* and *Mean Machines* magazines in England. Both of these contacts will be expanded over time to allow trading of international news and game-release information.

We've been sorting through the many letters we received from my request in the June 1991 *Letter From the Editor* column over whether we should limit our coverage to primarily domestic game information or expand the magazine to include more international news. Though we are still compiling the responses, which are still rolling in, we've gotten an overwhelming nod to at least offer overseas developments on an occasional basis. Again, these contacts from other gaming locales will help us get to that end much more reliably. Look for this coverage to hit the pages of VG&CE shortly.

The other common thread that came across in many of the letters and electronic mail (you can contact us over Delphi, CompuServe, Prodigy or MCI Mail, in addition to using the good, old U.S. Postal Service) is that VG&CE is considered to be "solid," "reliable" and "almost perfect." (*From an editor's* standpoint, this is really great to see directly from your readers' pens.) As we said before, above all we don't want to fall into a trap of printing information just to be first. We attempt to make sure the information that hits the pages of VG&CE is as reliable as possible. If you read it here, we want you to count on it as fact. We'll let our reputation bear that out.

Finally, as I said in the June *Letter From the Editor* column, *you are the* ones that make VG&CE what it is. If you keep buying it and tell our advertisers, they, too, will keep supporting us. We're getting stronger, and we want to thank you for all the support you have given in the past. Thanks for reading VG&CE!

—Andy Eddy, Executive Editor

BILL & TED ON NES®?

TRULY EXCELLENT!

Hey dudes! How'd you like to ride the Power Phone Booth to six different worlds.

GALACTIC, MAN.

Search for famous historical dudes through space and time.

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Party with the likes of Joan of Arc *(NOAH'S WIFE)* and Napoleon *(THE SHORT, DEAD DUDE).*

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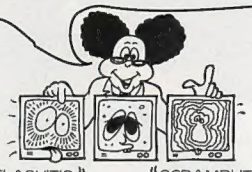
Does your video game system have a problem with flashing, scrambled or blank TV screens? My original cleaning kits are the cure!



"FLASHITIS" "SCRAMBLITIS" "BLANKITIS"

FIX-A-GAME

FIX-A-SYSTEM PLUS

FIX-A-SYSTEM

Is your Nintendo® controller malfunctioning? Are the on-screen figures not jumping, kicking or punching? Is it difficult to change directions or shoot and fire correctly? My Fix-A-Pad repair kit is the cure!

"CONTROLLOROSIS"

New!

FIX-A-PAD

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"BLANKOSIS"
"SCRAMBLOSIS"

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New!

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"BATTERIMIA"

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- Doc's Power Up A.C. Adaptor for NINTENDO®: Replaces broken Control Deck™ AC Adaptors.
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- Doc's 1 Minute Encyclopedia of simplified Nintendo® game instructions.

Find Doc's products at Toys R Us, Lionel Playworld, K & K, Kay Bee Toys, Venture, The Electronics Boutique, Software Etc., Hills, Fred Meyer, Meijer's Thrifty Acre.

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CIRCLE #104 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

ATTENTION NINTENDO® CONSOLE OWNERS

Did you buy a Nintendo® Entertainment System game console (NES Console) between June 1, 1988 and December 31, 1990? IF SO, YOU ARE ENTITLED TO A $5 COUPON.

New York Attorney General, Robert Abrams, Maryland Attorney General J. Joseph Curran, Jr., the Corporation Counsel of the District of Columbia, and the Attorneys General of 48 other States brought lawsuits against Nintendo of America Inc., claiming that in some instances consumers were overcharged for the NES console at retail stores. Under a proposed voluntary settlement in these cases, you are entitled to a $5 coupon redeemable at any retailer on any NES 8-bit game marketed either by Nintendo of America Inc. or a Nintendo licensee company that can be played on your NES 8-bit video game console.

This is your legal notice of the settlement. Please read it carefully.

You will automatically receive a $5 coupon if, between June 1, 1988 and December 31, 1990, you mailed in your warranty card, subscribed to Nintendo Power magazine or your name was otherwise entered on the Nintendo consumer list.

If you are not on the list to automatically receive a coupon, you must request a coupon and show that you bought a NES console between June 1, 1988 and December 31, 1990. To request a coupon or verify your eligibility, you must do either of the following by September 19, 1991.

1. **CALL TOLL FREE 1-800-255-3788**, from 4:00 a.m. - midnight, Pacific time, Mon. thru Sat.; or Sunday, 8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m., Pacific time. Be ready to tell the operator your name and address, the approximate date you bought your game console, where you bought it & the serial number (located on the bottom of the control deck),

or

2. **Write in,** giving your name, address, approximately when you bought your game console, where you bought it & the serial number. Send your information to:

Nintendo Settlement Fund,
P.O. Box 97063, Redmond, WA 98073-9763

THE SETTLEMENT

These cases were brought by the Attorneys General of 50 States and the District of Columbia after an investigation into whether Nintendo and unnamed dealers agreed to sell NES consoles at or above certain minimum prices in violation of the antitrust laws.

No trial has been held on the merits of these allegations and Nintendo denies them. After extensive negotiations, the parties to the lawsuits agreed to a proposed settlement agreement to avoid long and costly litigation. The States have concluded that the settlement gives significant relief to buyers of Nintendo products during the period of the alleged conspiracy (March 1, 1987 - December 31, 1990). Nintendo has agreed to settle but without admitting wrongdoing or liability. The proposed settlement must be finally approved by the Court, which has preliminarily approved the settlement. This notice does not express any opinion of the Court as to the merits of the claims or defenses asserted by either side in the lawsuits.

In summary, the terms of the settlement are as follows:

Nintendo will mail up to $25 million in coupons to consumers who bought NES consoles between June 1, 1988 and December 31, 1990.

If fewer than $5 million in coupons are redeemed by consumers, Nintendo will pay the difference up to $5 million to the States to use for antitrust enforcement, a public purpose to benefit consumers, or to deposit in the state treasury. In addition, Nintendo will pay the States $3 million for these purposes.

Nintendo will also agree to an injunction prohibiting future violations of the antitrust laws and will notify its dealers that they are free to price Nintendo products independently at whatever level they choose.

The Attorneys General will release Nintendo from any further liability resulting from the alleged agreements between Nintendo and dealers, between March 1, 1987 and December 31, 1990, regarding the price at which any Nintendo products would be sold.

The legal rights of all buyers of Nintendo products between March 1, 1987 & December 31, 1990; including game consoles, game cartridges, accessories or related items; will be affected by this settlement. If you bought any of these products within this period and you do not want to be bound by the settlement, you must expressly exclude yourself. To opt out of this settlement or for more information, write to Nintendo Settlement Trustee, 1525 Wilson Blvd., Suite 1225, Arlington, VA 22209.

By Order of Judge Robert W. Sweet, U.S. Dist. Ct., S.D.N.Y.

LEGAL EAGLE EYE

Dear VG&CE:

I've been a reader for the past year and usually enjoy your magazine, but I'm sick and tired of you regularly spreading falsehoods and rumors about Nintendo.

First of all, you have utterly distorted the facts in the Nintendo vs. Tengen legal case. Here are the real facts: In 1988, Tengen was an official licensee for Nintendo and published *Gauntlet* and *R.B.I. Baseball*. Then Tengen terminated its dealings with Nintendo and started producing unlicensed games. It's obvious to anyone with common sense, that the only reason Tengen became an official licensee was to obtain Nintendo's patented lock-out chip and produce illegal copies of it. So, obviously, Nintendo sued Tengen for patent infringement. Tengen knew it had no defense, so it fabricated a story claiming Nintendo was threatening retailers not to carry "outlaw" games and rival video-game systems. The real reason retailers aren't carrying Tengen's products is because they know Tengen is using pirated chips. I would like to know why you only printed Tengen's version and completely disregarded Nintendo's side of the story? I think your readers should know the unaltered facts and not just Tengen's distorted version of them.

Another complaint I have is whenever you mention "system exclusivity," you always blame Nintendo for starting this practice. You fail to mention Sega and NEC also enforce "system exclusivity." Is this because you don't want to jeopardize your relationship with them, and lose their advertising accounts?

Finally, I would like to know why, whenever you talk about "multisystem publishing," you always talk about putting NES games on other video-game systems, but never discuss putting other system's games on the NES or Super NES? To have true cross-system publishing, all companies will have to initiate a "multisystem publishing" policy, not just Nintendo.

I know you will never print this letter, since it contradicts everything you have said about this situation, but I don't care. I just wanted to let you know how I feel about this issue. By the way, SNES really means," Super Nintendo Eradicates Sega." Thank you.

—John Lucas
No city or state specified

Thanks for your letter, John, and here it is in its entirety. We're not sure who you know inside Tengen that has given you these "facts," but we have to dispute them. Let's take them one at a time:

• Tengen didn't get a license to produce NES games simply to acquire the technology. According to Tengen's side of the story, its carts weren't being produced in sufficient quantity to meet demand for them—games like Gauntlet *and* Pac-Man *were being requested by gamers, but low production runs (which were under Nintendo's control) kept them off the shelves. The claim of patent infringement against Tengen's "unlicensed" cartridges hasn't been proven yet.*

*• Tengen never "fabricated the story" that Nintendo threatened retailers, though it did help the U.S. Congressman who investigated Nintendo. The results were later turned over to the Federal Trade Commission, who we feel made a poor decision in doling out its punishment (*Yea & Nay, *July 1991). Also, a judge did rule that if unlicensed games were determined to be infringing on Nintendo patents, the retailers could be held liable. Tengen didn't create this story either.*

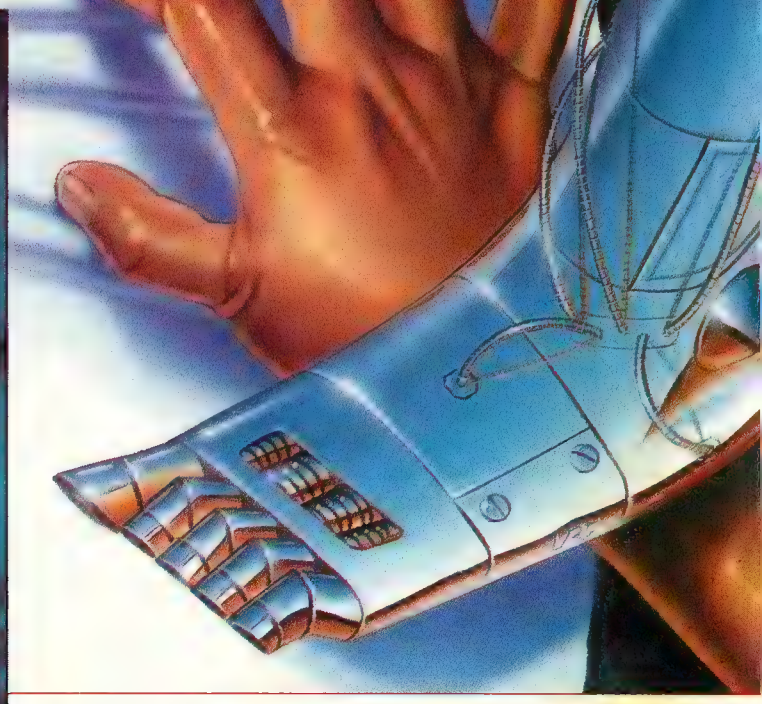
Also, if Tengen didn't have any defense, it would have lost its case by now. And the only response on anything that we have gotten from Nintendo was in reply to Andy Eddy's editorial about Dr. Mario *(October 1990).*

• System exclusivity has, until recently, been perpetuated by Nintendo. Only now are we seeing the situation that exists in the PC-software and Japanese video-game markets, where game titles are crossing over to other systems. We're also not aware that, other than keeping their own products close to their vest (that's shrewd marketing, in our view), Sega and NEC are signing exclusivity deals. Otherwise, games like Air Buster/Aero Blaster, Turrican *or* Shadow of the Beast *wouldn't appear on both the Genesis and TG-16. We hardly fear losing advertising for stating facts, John. We have tried to position* VG&CE *to be a reader's magazine, one that can be trusted for "real" information.*

• Finally, the reason we would like to see NES titles come to other machines is because Nintendo licensed most of the major game producers for the NES. It would be nice to see a TG-16 version of Adventure Island *(which exists in*

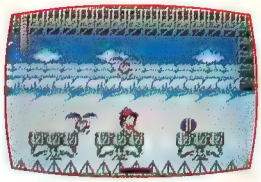
Letters to be considered for publication should be addressed to *Reader Mail*, VG&CE, 9171 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 300, Beverly Hills, CA 90210. Letters may be edited for style, clarity and space considerations. We regret that we cannot respond to all mail received.

DON'T TURN THAT PAGE EARTHMAN! WE KRIONS HAVE YOUR PUNY PLANET NOW!

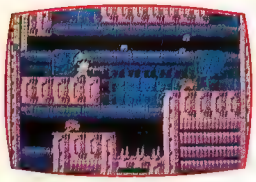


Earth's skies are raining metallic men from a predator planet, and your only hope against the Krion Empire is a witch that vanished generations ago. Francesca, we need you!

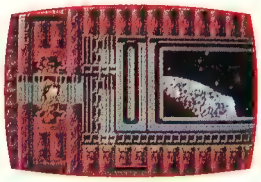
The good witch Francesca, who has come to save the planet from The Krion Empire, has infiltrated the ice base! Before she can do battle with Yukimaru, the Snow Monster, she must get by this Krion Menace!



Among the clouds Francesca searches for Sky Hawk's base. Beware of the robo bees and *deadly* spikes!



"Gasp...Choke!!!" Francesca had better find an air pocket fast or risk drowning!



Thousands of miles above the earth Francesca continues her quest to end the Krion reign!

The Krion Conquest™

THIS GAME IS LICENSED BY NINTENDO FOR PLAY ON THE Nintendo ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM®

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CIRCLE #105 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Japan) or Contra *on the Genesis, for instance. However, as examples,* Dragon Spirit *is both a TG-16 and NES game; and* Chip's Challenge *is on the Lynx and soon to be on the NES. Again, Nintendo has stopped the exclusive contracts, so perhaps we will see more crossovers.*

By the way, we don't think the SNES will take over the videogame industry, as you may expect. With the announcement that the Genesis will now have Sonic the Hedgehog *bundled with the system at $149.95, the low price of $99.95 for the TG-16 and the fact that both systems have a two-year head start, we don't feel that Nintendo's new entry will "eradicate" anyone right away. Of course, that's simply our early opinion.*

OUT WITH THE OLD, IN WITH THE NEW

Dear VG&CE:

For some time now I've read your magazine, and I must say that I can't stand your prejudice toward older companies. My family owned an Atari 2600 for ten years before getting rid of it, and we only got rid of it because it finally broke down. We also own 96 games for the 2600. After that, we bought a 7800. We still own it and also own an NES. I have found endless enjoyment in playing the NES and the 7800. I am also the #2-ranked NES player, unofficially, having beaten over 105 games. It's not like I don't like the Genesis or NEC, but the Atari and Nintendo systems will not be outdone whatsoever. Any idiot at your magazine or any other who thinks so can just go suffer through it, but Nintendo will be #1 always.

—Nick Smith
Advance, North Carolina

We're confused about what you're accusing us of: being too dedicated to the older systems or too dedicated to the newer systems? If you read the Game Doctor *column, you'll know that he often gives advice on how to acquire games and peripherals for machines like the Intellivision, Colecovision and Vectrex—which most consider the best system ever invented, even in comparison to today's consoles.*

On the other hand, if we are to remain current, which is what most people are looking for, we have to cover the Genesis, TurboGrafx-16 and Neo•Geo in addition to the NES. We'd love to cover the 2600, 5200, XEGS and 7800, but there just isn't that much going on in that area. Let's consider it ancient history, though a good history just the same. Sorry if it ruins your day, Nick, but one day the NES will be old hat also.

PUSHING THE GENESIS

Dear VG&CE:

I would like to know if videogame companies use the full capabilities of the systems, and if so, what games for the Genesis are good examples of its full potential?

—Ralph D. Woodson
Muncie, Indiana

It's difficult to point to specific games as absolute *examples of what a machine can do—programmers can often go past what a game machine is expected to do.*

Sega's Sonic the Hedgehog *does its thing faster than most people thought possible for the Genesis. Also,* Sonic *shows the first instance in our memory of playfield rotation.*

PICKING A VIDEO FIGHT

Dear VG&CE:

I was just wondering why NEC hasn't made any good action/fighting games for the TurboGrafx-16? I mean, Genesis has games like *Last Battle*. The Super Famicom has a great game called *Final Fight*. Even the NES has a few fun fighting games, like *Bad Dudes* and *Double Dragon*. All the TG-16 has is *China Warrior*, which isn't fun, and *Vigilante* (no challenge).

Do you know of any fighting games that will be made for the TG-16 in the near future?

—Brad Nichols
Anacortes, Washington

Granted, China Warrior *and* Vigilante *won't satisfy most hard-core martial-arts fanatics,* Fighting Street *was also a good game (though it's limitation is that it only came out for the TG-16 on CD).*

One of NEC's newest licensees, Loriciel of Paris, France, will be bringing Panza Kick Boxing *to the TG-16 later this year. The game features hot graphics and action.*

BATTLETECHNICALS

Dear VG&CE:

I wanted to congratulate you on your coverage of the BattleTech Center (May 1991). Your magazine is outstanding. I subscribed to it because it appealed to more mature gamers.

Is there any chance of BattleTech Center being linked via modem to home computers?

—Jared Hardy
Ramona, California

Sorry, Jared, but the intricacies of BattleTech Center make it impossible to link it to a home PC.

During the recent CES, VG&CE*'s editors fought it out at BattleTech—and it is a blast. It's growing so keep an eye out for a possible BattleTech opening near you.*

CORRECTIONS

Some errors crept into VG&CE recently that we want to clarify:

- **In the *Reader Mail* section of the June 1991 issue, we noted that *Final Fantasy Legend* was released by Nintendo. Actually, Square Soft is the company that brought *FFL* to the Game Boy.**
- **Our "Playball!" baseball roundup (July 1991) said under "16-Bit Baseball" that SNK would be producing the Genesis version of *RBI Baseball*. The company that is producing the *RBI Baseball* video-game line is Tengen.**

We apologize for these errors.

September 17th, 2087

Vol. XXXXIV, Issue XXXIXVXI

GALAXY GAZETTE

Aerostar Blasts To Earth!

It has been many years since the Intergalactic Council allowed the earth to be populated after a series of devastating wars. In the years following our return we as a people have struggled for survival. The most difficult battle is still ahead. At this writing, mutant forces are wreaking havoc on our defenseless planet.

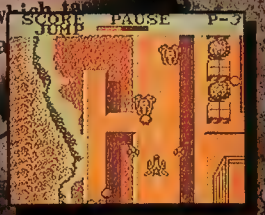
Our cry for help has not gone unanswered. The Intergalactic Council has made an effort to stop these violent attacks by deploying AEROSTAR. This state-of-the-art nuclear-generated vehicle of destruction is ready to face the most intense combat. Unfortunately, AEROSTAR is missing the most important factor—a pilot.

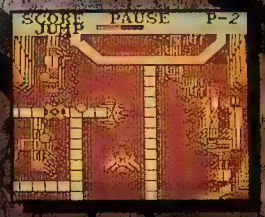
As the search for our defender persists, conditions on earth grow worse. The human people can only hope salvation is near.

AEROSTAR

Intergalactic Council Meeting Today.

the [illegible] members from nine galaxies are [illegible] to discuss the future [illegible] forces. They hope to reach an agreement on which to [illegible] troy the enemy, Earth lea[illegible] attacks. Intergalactic [illegible] Earth soon.





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Nintendo

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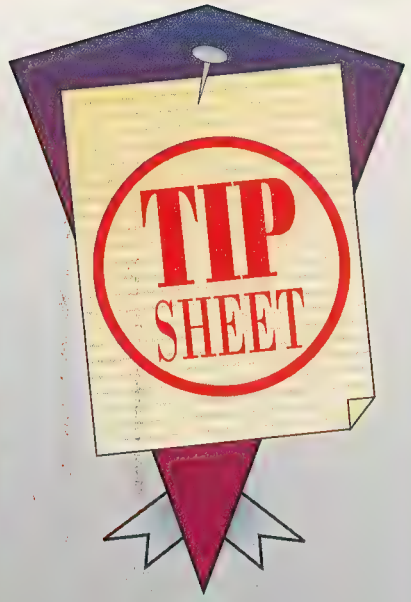
CIRCLE #106 ON READER SERVICE CARD

Even the best player has trouble with a game now and again, but where can you turn for help? VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT has designed ***Tip Sheet*** to give you, the reader, answers to questions such as, "How do I defeat the end boss on this level?" or, "I've looked everywhere, but I can't find the blue vase." So if you're having a problem on a game, write to us, and our group of experts will do everything they can to solve it. Send your letters to

VG&CE,
9171 Wilshire Blvd.,
Suite 300
Beverly Hills, CA 90210
Attn: *Tip Sheet*



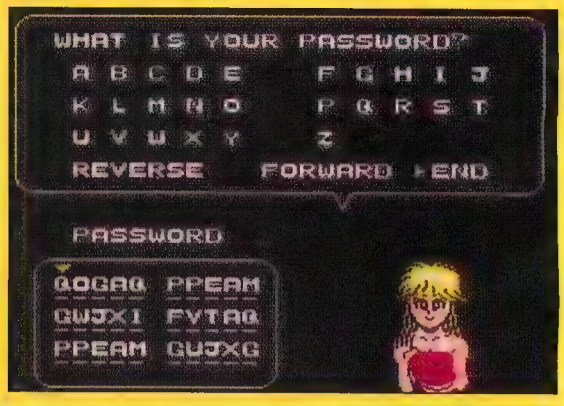
by Donn Nauert

How do I get 98 men in the NES game *Bad Dudes*? How about a level select or invincibility?
—Gabriel Correa
Benson, Minnesota

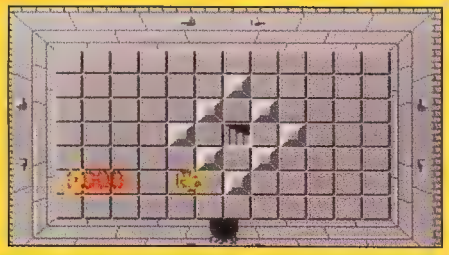
You can get 64 men instead of 98 by using this Easter egg. During the title screen, press on Controller 2, B, A, D, U, D and U, then press ***START*** *on Controller 1. Sorry, as far as we know, there's no way to get 98 men, level select or invincibility in this game.*

My wife and I have been playing *Casino Kid* for about a year and a half, but we can't seem to beat the last two blackjack and poker dealers. Is there a code we can enter in order to get to the final showdown?
—William Vincent
Sweet Home, Oregon

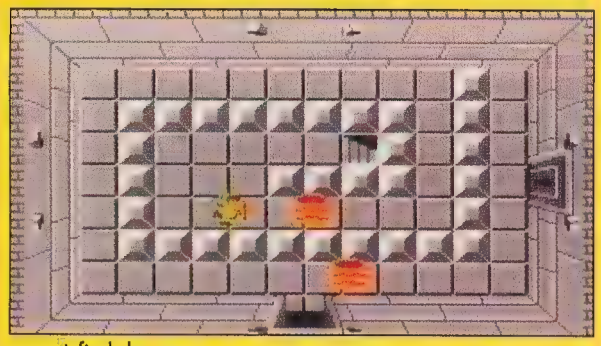
Sure, we can give you passwords to reach the next-to-last opponents. After you input the code, go straight down from the entrance and talk to the woman. She's the last player to beat before you go against the Casino King. The code is: QOGAQ PPEAM GWJXI FVTAQ PPEAM GUJXG.



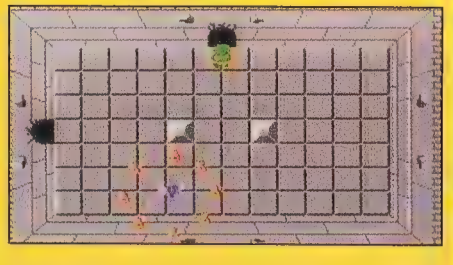
In *Legend of Zelda* I'm having trouble finding the silver arrow, and I'm also having trouble defeating Gannon. Please help.
—Adam Apodaca
El Paso, Texas



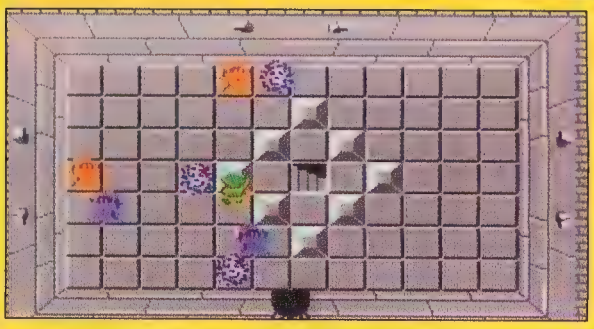
We have been playing the *Legend of Zelda* and are in need of two things. One, how do you get to the last room in Level 9, and where is the red ring?
—Beth and Shirley Sleeter
Warminster, Pennsylvania



In the second quest of the *Legend of Zelda* where can I find the bow?
—Ernest Xavier
Baton Rouge, Louisiana



In the second quest of the *Legend of Zelda*, I can't find dungeons 3, 5, 6 and 8. Can you help?
—Linda Leduc
Pittsburg, New Hampshire



To say we got a flood of Zelda questions is an understatement.

For the first two letters, I'm assuming this is for the first quest, since you didn't indicate which one it was for. To defeat Gannon you must have the silver arrow and red ring, which are located on the opposite sides of Level 9. From the start, move one room up, then move through the left door. Now if you have the ladder, you can move to the center at the top and use a bomb to open a hidden door. If you don't have the ladder, move one room to the left, one room up and then use a bomb on the right-hand wall. Once you're in this room, go down the stairs. From this room travel two

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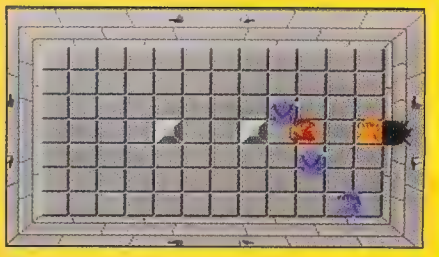
rooms to the right, one room down, then blast a hole in the right-hand side and go in. Now you'll need to use two bombs on the top walls as you travel two rooms up. This is where the red ring is located.

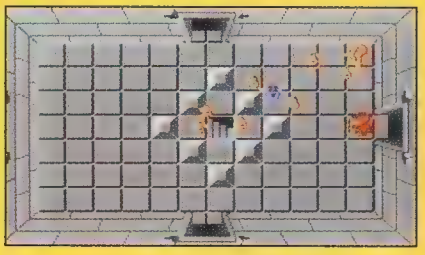
To find the silver arrow, follow the directions above, but instead of moving two rooms right then going down, use a key to go up instead. Use a bomb on the left wall, and go one room to the left, then move down the stairs. From this new room, travel two rooms to the left to another set of stairs and go down. Now use a bomb on the top wall and go into that room. This is where the silver arrows are located. From the silver arrow location, travel one room back down, and go down the stairs. From the new room travel three rooms up, then use a bomb on the left wall, and go into the room and down the stairs. Once you appear in the new room, use a bomb on the left wall and enter this room. Now go down the stairs, and move up into the room where Gannon awaits.

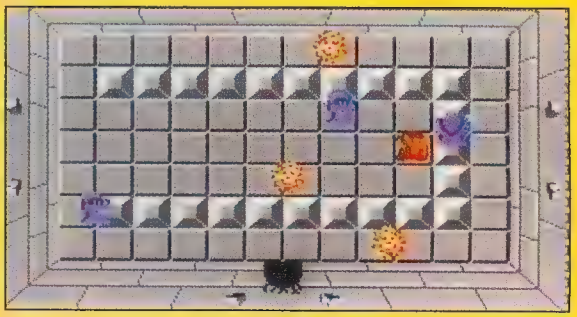
You can find the bow in the fifth dungeon of the second quest. From the start move one room up, one to the left and then one down, then go down the stairs. When you come out on the other side, move one room right, then one room down.

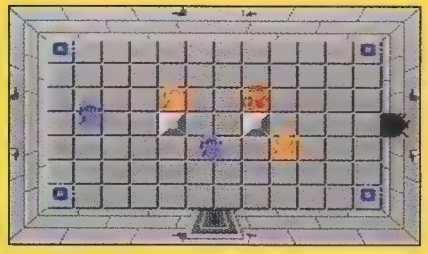
For Dungeons 3 and 8, locate the areas as shown in the pictures. For Level 3 blow the whistle when you're near the water (lake), and for Level 8 you'll need to use bombs to find the entrance. Level 5 is on the island in the center of the map, which is where Level 4 in the first quest was located, so you need the raft. And Level 6 is located in the graveyard on the far left—push a tombstone to uncover the entrance.

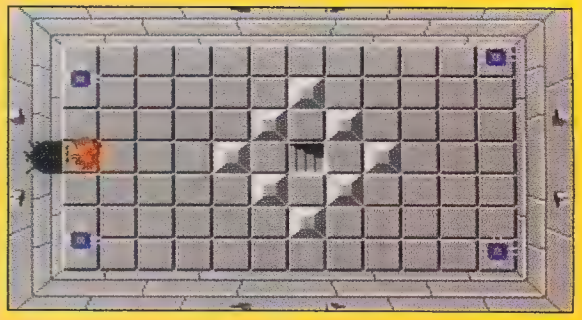
To get the whistle, you'll need to find Level 2. From the start go five rooms up and use a bomb on the right-hand wall. After entering that room, go one down and you'll find the whistle. The raft is a little more hidden: You'll need to defeat DigDogger, the level boss, and go up into the room with the Triforce. Don't get the Triforce yet; instead go three more rooms up. Once you're in the third room, you'll need to defeat all the enemies and push a block for the stairs to open. When you have the raft, you'll have to exit to the left and work your way back to the Triforce room.

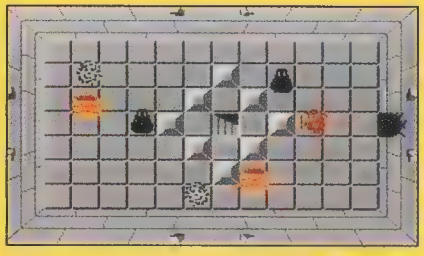


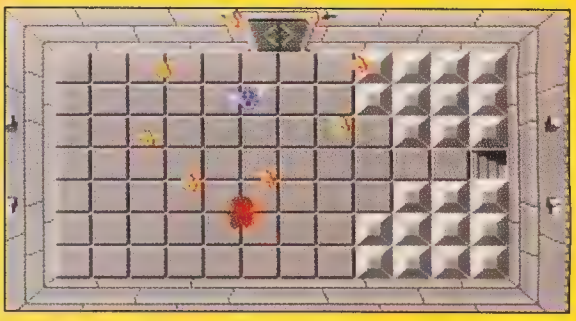


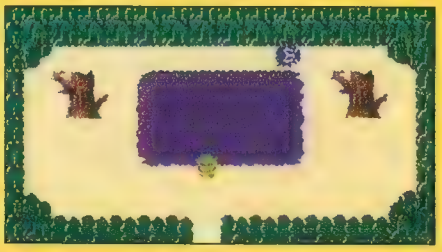












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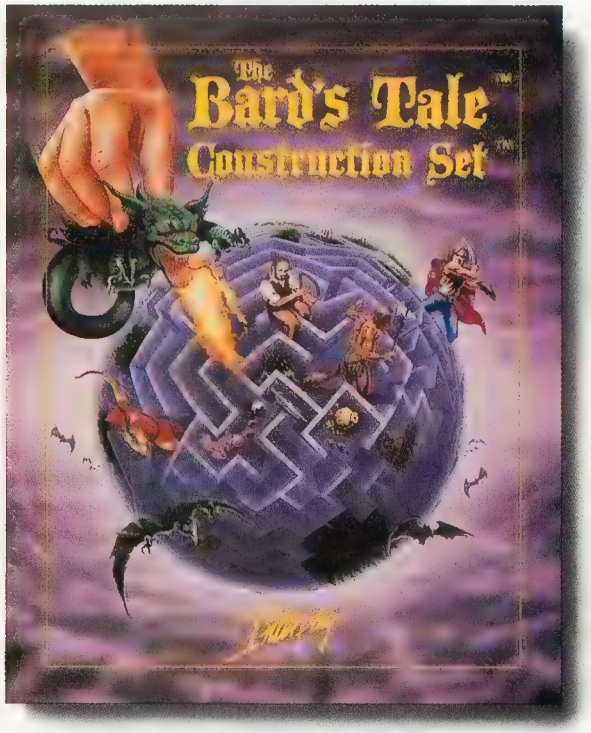

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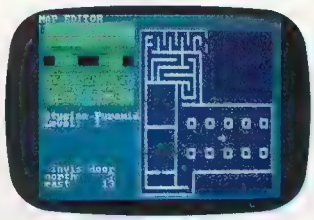

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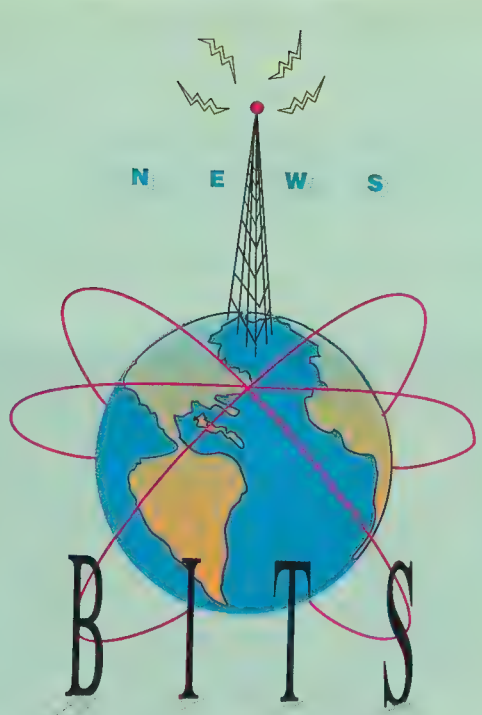


Nintendo Goes CD

The leader in cartridge entertainment will help bring the audiovisual magic of compact disc (CD) to America's home-gaming screens by Christmas 1993. Nintendo of America has been working with both Sony and Philips Electronics N.V., to develop CD-based gaming technology.

The machinations and in-fighting burst into the open at the Summer Consumer Electronics Show last June in Chicago. Sony unveiled its plan to make the Play Station, a console that will combine a Nintendo Super NES with a CD-ROM drive.

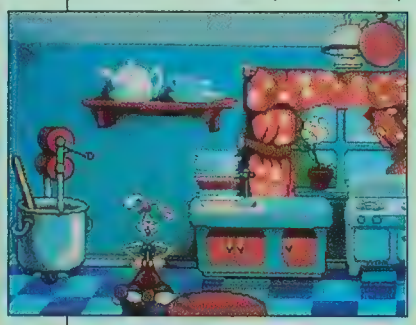
At a major press conference the next day, Nintendo Vice-President Peter Main stunned a room full of journalists with the announcement that Nintendo had struck a deal with Philips Electronics N.V. to jointly develop CD hardware and software. Under the worldwide licensing agreement, the companies will work together on multimedia projects.

The first step, according to Main, will be the creation of a Philips CD player that connects to the Super NES. Nintendo will make CD games for the unit, and it appears likely that Nintendo will also support Philips' forthcoming CD-I machine with entertainment product.

The Nintendo of America executive stressed that his company will *not* support the Sony Play Station.

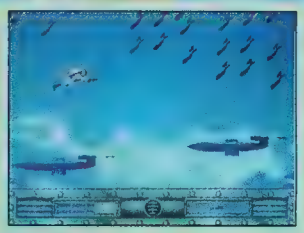
Disney Characters Light PC Screen

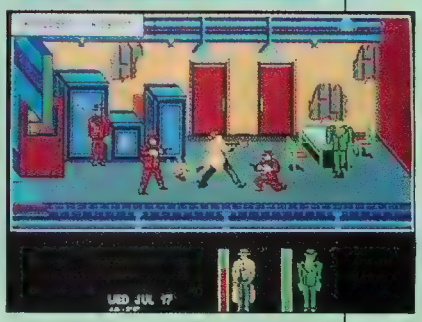
The new lineup of games from Disney Software (scheduled for release in the last half of this year) specializes in bringing pop-culture heroes to the computer screen. The company unveiled a lineup of games bearing the Disney imprint that emphasizes outstanding sound and graphics.



Hare Raising Havoc, which the company bills as their first truly interactive cartoon, stars Roger Rabbit, who must locate and rescue Baby Herman. The gamer must guide Roger through a series of kinetic puzzles that require the gamer to joystick-manipulate the character from room to room in search of the missing child. The graphics are movie-toon perfect, the action is innovative and the product supports a variety of sound boards, including Disney's own Sound Source.

The Rocketeer, based on the movie, combines comic book-style graphics with video-taped actors and uses footage from the movie in VGA digitized visuals. Players get to fly vintage aircraft, fight Nazi henchmen and (best of all) pilot the rocket pack. One of the most outstanding products previewed at the Summer Consumer Electronic Show, it will be on retailers' shelves this fall.





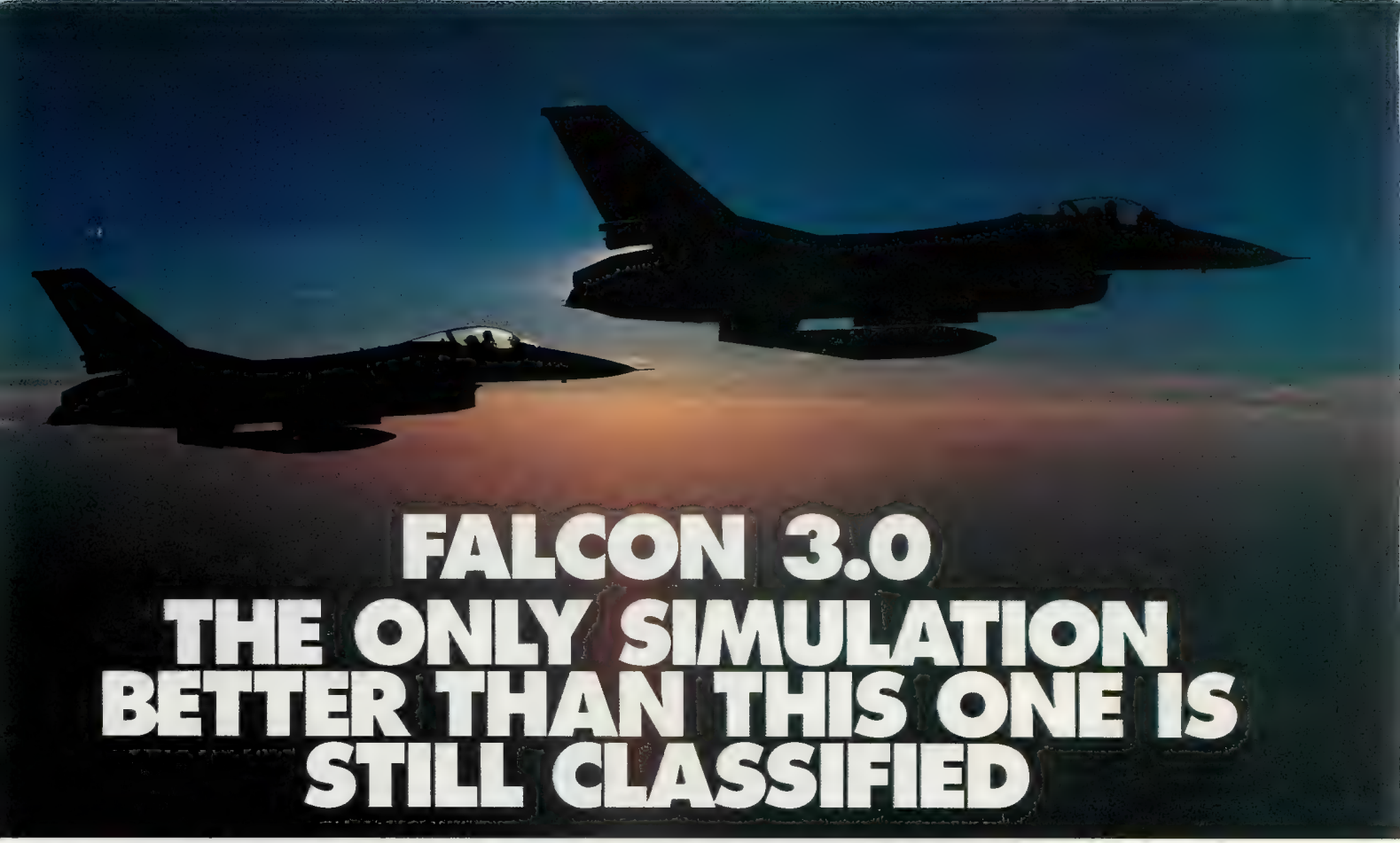
Other new Disney products include *Dick Tracy,* a beautiful blend of theater and comic book graphics; and *Stunt Island,* which gives the player a chance to make "movies" using various props and perform daring aircraft stunts.

All products will be available for IBM PC and Amiga computers.

Computer-Game Sales Soar for 1991's First Quarter

Continued IBM PC growth fueled a solid sales increase for computer entertainment in the first three months of 1991. Statistics accumulated from its member companies by the Software Publishers Association (SPA) indicate that a 37% spurt in IBM PC game software more than offset the virtual disintegration of the 8-bit software market. The three-month total for all home-computer games was $71.8 million.

IBM PC game sales hit $56.3 million in the first quarter, versus $40.8 in the comparable period of 1990. This was one of the biggest gains for any category of IBM



The bogey came out of nowhere. You see him just off your tail. The adrenalin hits you like a fist. You call your wingman: "Viper One, I've got a bandit on my six. This is not good..."

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You go to afterburner and your Falcon jumps, slamming you back in the seat. The MiG 29 has just reached missile range... There! He's fired, the deadly rocket screams toward you, seeing nothing but the heat of your exhaust. Without thinking, you drop a series of flares hoping to confuse it, and yank back on the stick... 50 degrees... 80... over the top... your Head Up display shows you're pulling 9g's...

With Falcon 3.0, you lead your own squadron of pilots. Your missions are straight from today's headlines: Panama, Iraq, or some other international hot spot. The mountains, valleys, and rivers you fly over conform precisely to military maps of the areas.

You and your wingman begin the attack, deep behind enemy lines.

... Nearly blacked out, you ease forward on the stick. The g's drop, and you can see again. There he is! You're on HIS six now. This is going to be sweet. As you get tone you know he's yours.

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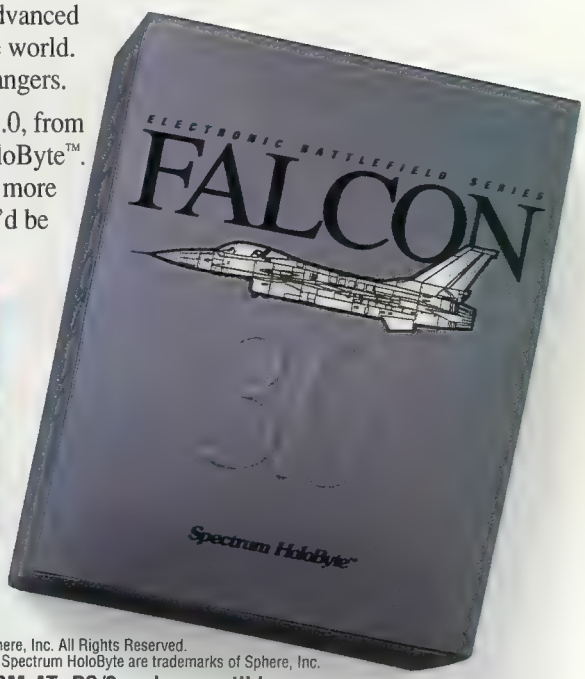

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PC software and significantly above the 21.3% increase in overall IBM PC program sales.

This starkly contrasted with 8-bit performance. Total game sales for all systems other than IBM PC and Macintosh shrank to 9.4 million. That represented a dizzying 55.8% drop. Macintosh game sales stayed static, finishing at $4.5 million for the first 90 days of the current year.

Maxis Thinks Small for Next Sim Title

What comes after *SimCity* and *SimEarth?* Maxis President Jeff Braun debunked rumors of a *SimUniverse* and told VG&CE that his company's next title will narrow its focus considerably from the last two.

SimAnt takes place in the backyard of a typical American suburban home. The game (still in its early stages of development) will take the player inside the anthill to confront the problems and dangers of an insect colony.

Lightwave Shows Sound System for NES

Lightwave Technologies has the answer for those video-gaming "turn-the-sound-down" blues. The company just released their GameSounds Personal Remote Sound System, which connects directly to the Nintendo's audio output. The sound is then conducted through cordless headphones, directly from the Nintendo sound chip, for up to 30 feet.

The GameSounds system comes with headphones, one transmitter and one receiver with patch cord, for $34.99. As many additional receivers as desired can be added, at $24.99 each (including headphones), and the receivers also double as portable FM radios when you're not playing NES games.

Lightwave Technologies
16595 W. Easton
Prairie View, IL 60069
(708) 634-1700

Software Simulates Soviet Society

Spectrum HoloByte is currently developing *Crisis in the Kremlin,* a simulation of current times in the Soviet Union. Vladimir Baculyn (who came to Spectrum HoloByte from the U.S.S.R.), is the lead programmer on the project.

Crisis in the Kremlin is a geopolitical simulation that requires the gamer to initiate policies, budgets and reforms. Gamers play "what if" scenarios where they experiment with varying political stances ranging from ultra-right to ultra-left. The player allots funds to institutions and causes, then sees the result on the society.

The company has good reason to explore the Soviet Union for game inspiration. Spectrum HoloByte had phenomenal success with its *"Tris"* series and, in fact, has two new *Tris* games currently in the works. *Wordtris* crosses the tumbling block game with a word puzzle that requires the user to manipulate lettered tiles so that they fall in position to form a word. The game features a 30,000 word dictionary and will be available for play on IBM PC and Macintosh computers.

Spectrum HoloByte is also working on *Super Tetris,* designed by Alexey *"Tris"* Pajitnov, to continue the line that included *Tetris, Welltris* and *Faces...Tris III. Super Tetris* will boast all new Soviet scenes and theme music for each level.

Acclaim to Manufacture Cartridges; Sends Games Abroad

In an industry first, Acclaim announced it would commence the manufacturing of its own NES cartridges. Acclaim is the first of four companies authorized to do their own cartridge manufacturing (the others are Activision, Sunsoft and Konami). The first independently manufactured NES title will be ready by autumn.

Robert Holmes, Acclaim's president, had this to say about the move: "Since we were the first American company to publish Nintendo-compatible software under a license from Nintendo, it is fitting that we are now pioneering the licensee-manufacturing process. We feel this development will improve overall production flexibility, potentially resulting in quicker turnaround of product to the market, as well as tighter inventory controls."

Manufacturing will be done through an agreement with Key Tronic Manufacturing of Spokane, Washington.

In a separate statement, Acclaim announced plans to send five NES titles per year to the European market under the LJN label. The first of these games will be introduced this autumn by Acclaim's offices located in the United Kingdom and Germany.

Gilligan's Island Sighted at Midway

The latest pin from Bally/Midway is an adventure to save the castaways on *Gilligan's Island.* Seems the island god Kona must be calmed with the professor's secret formula lava seltzer. Players have to gather seven ingredients, then pour the seltzer into Kona. It's a pinballer's romp through the jungle, with million-point-plus scoring possibilities.

The new pinball machine uses the theme music from the long-lived comedy series, vocal prompts by Gilligan and an illustrated playfield and backboard featuring the stars of the show.

Capstone's Got Exotic Car

The latest in the long line of fancy autos for computer drivers comes from Capstone. *Exotic Car Showroom* is a collection of 15 of the world's best automobiles. The disk, a browser's delight, contains five VGA digitized views of every car, along with complete stats and performance data. There's also a comparison analysis mode so that serious auto buffs can try to decide just which one is

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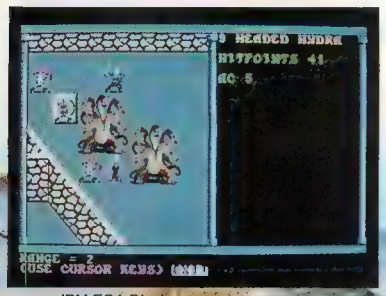

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really the best. Among the high-cost wheels on disk are the Acura NSX, BMW 850i, Corvette ZR1, various Ferraris, the Gemballa Mirage, Lotus Turbo Esprit and other equally expensive autos. You can't race them, but they are great to look at.

For action lovers, *Super Car*Pak* combines three programs. *Exotic Car Showroom* is packed with Electronic Arts' *Ferrari Formula One* and Accolade's *Grand Prix Circuit*. The idea is to browse the *Exotic* collection, then design and test a Ferrari, enter Formula One Racing and, finally, race in the *Grand Prix* courses, all for $59.95 (IBM PC). Both software packs are available.

Capstone
14202 W. 136th St.
Miami, FL 33186
(305) 252-9048

Ad Lib Cuts Prices, Gains Support; Introduces New Sound Card

Ad Lib reduced the price of its PC sound card, the Ad Lib Music Synthesizer Card, from $149.95 to $119.95. The card continues to gain prestige in the IBM PC gaming community. The latest company to announce support for Ad Lib is Epyx; *California Games II* will now utilize the Ad Lib sound board.

The company also unveiled a new family of Ad Lib sound boards called the Ad Lib Gold Multimedia Stereo Sound Adapters. The new boards have more features, more voices, increased flexibility and better sound quality than the earlier version. The Ad Lib Gold PC-1000 works with IBM PC, XT, AT and compatibles and comes with a microphone jack, table-top mike, game and MIDI ports and standard stereo output and input jacks. The Gold AT-2000 works with the IBM PC AT and compatibles, with both disk and CD-ROM applications. It has the same ports, jacks and accessories, plus a standard SCSI interface port. The Ad Lib Gold MC-2000 is identical except it is designed for installation in desktop computers that use Micro Channel bus architecture. Ad Lib boards are sold at most computer stores or contact Ad Lib directly.

Ad Lib
50 Staniford St., Ste. 800
Boston, MA 02114
(418) 529-9676

Fuji Forms Advisory Council

Fuji Film Floppy Disks has formed the Fuji Home Office Advisory Council to offer advice and assistance to people who work at home. The six council members, with backgrounds in business and technology, are currently writing *The Fuji Home Office Guide, Volume II*, a follow-up to last year's pamphlet on home-based businesses. The *Guide* will be available this fall.

The first volume was sent at no charge to over 100,000 people. *Volume II* will contain information on marketing, money management, home-office equipment and software, mobile office products and space utilization. In addition, it will invite readers to write to the council with specific questions. *Volume II* can be obtained by writing.

Fuji Film USA
P.O. Box 5128
Bergenfield, NJ 07621

New Head Cleaners Introduced

Athana has jumped on the cleaner bandwagon with a couple of products of interest to home computerists. Athana's *Disk Care* packets, for either 3.5" or 5.25" floppies, are good for 15 uses each, and both have a handy chart right on the cleaner disks to keep track of how many times they've been utilized. Both retail for around $2.10.

The Athana products use wet-style cleaners. The user places 5 drops of fluid on the underside of the cleaning disk, inserts the disk into the drive, then operates the drive for 10-15 seconds (30 seconds for the 5.25" size).

In addition to the cleaners, the company produces a full line of diskettes, including hard-to-find 8" disks, either branded or in bulk, and magnetic tapes. Athana will also preformat disks to the computer of choice, by request.

Athana
2730 Monterey St., Ste. 106
Torrance, CA 90510
(213) 775-3741

Hard Nova Clue Book Ready

Electronic Arts' *Hard Nova* will become "Easy Nova" with their new hint book. The 104-page guide contains chapters on money, including explanations of smuggling, trading

and gun running, hardware (covers the automated medical lining, armor and weapons), chapters on spacecraft, hovership and ground combat and descriptions of skills. There's also the story of Nova's life and an appendix that covers all locations and items.

Hard Nova Cluebook retails for $12.95 and is available from Electronic Arts and computer software outlets.

Keyboard Organizer Keeps Desk Tidy

Curtis Manufacturing has just the gizmo to keep your work area neat. The *Keyboard Organizer* has eight diskette slots, compartments for pens, pencils and paper clips, a memo pad, a compartment for mouse storage, and even space for a standard mouse pad. When not in use, the

plastic cover protects the keyboard, and during use, it doubles as a copy holder.

The handy organizer also has a full-length palm rest across the front of the keyboard, which supports the user's wrist for more restful typing. It retails for $39.95 and has a lifetime warranty.

Curtis Manufacturing
30 Fitzgerald Drive
Jaffrey, NH
(603) 532-4132

Sony Unveils Laser Library

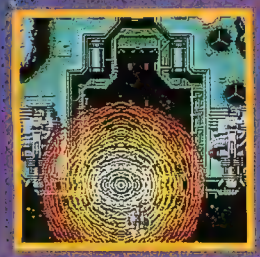
Sony entered the home-entertainment multimedia market with the Sony Laser Library, a six-disc collection with CD-ROM player, that's designed to retail for about $700. The player connects to a computer, then delivers text, sound, color photographs and limited-motion video through an optical-laser reader.

The Laser Library contains *Compton's Encyclopedia, National Geographic's Mammals*, a dictionary that translates into 12 languages, a world atlas and other reference materials. The one game included in this initial set is Sierra's *Mixed-Up Mother Goose*.

Computer Designed for New Users

V-Tech has a new computer, the IQ Unlimited Computer, with 12 built-in software programs, designed especially for the inexperienced, children and nontechnical users. De-

16-BIT



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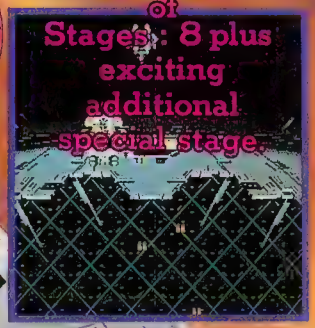

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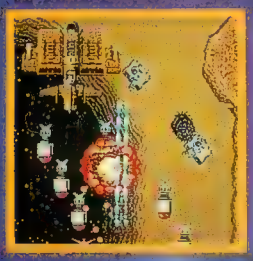

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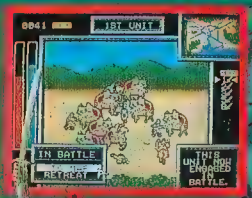

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signed to sell for under $200, the computer features plug-in-and-use technology that requires no skills.

The computer has no disk drive and uses no software. Instead, it comes with built-in programs: Word Processor, Spreadsheet, Database, Calculator, Spell Right, a 200-Year Calendar, Basic, Basic Tutor and Art Studio. There are also two educational games, *Word Zappers* and *Mind Challenge*.

It comes with all the adapters, connectors and cables required and hooks directly into any TV. The computer works with most Epson printers or the IQ Unlimited printer (sold separately).

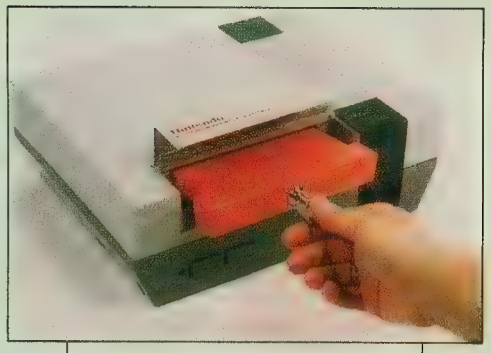
The word processor holds (and saves) up to eight pages (sufficient for most home uses).

The IQ Unlimited Computer, marketed under the Advantech Electronics brand name, will be sold in toy stores and retail chains and directly from the company this fall.

Advantech
380 W. Palatine Road
Wheeling, IL 60090

Vid-Game Lock Calls "Time Out!"

Niche Technology has the answer for parents who need help controlling their kids' video-gaming habits. *Time Out!* is a lock-out device that requires no assembly. It features a pick-resistant lock that slides into the game console car-



tridge slot, so that kids can't use the game console until it is removed.

The gadget works with a Nintendo or Sega console and retails for about $10.

Niche Technology
862 Terrace Drive
Los Altos, CA 94024
(415) 948-4200

Civilization Now on Disk

Sid *"Railroad Tycoon"* Meier tackled a tough subject in his latest game. *Civilization* (MicroProse/IBM PC) lets players create a culture, then lead it from the foundation of its first settlements to the space age. The gamer makes all political, economic and military decisions, expands into new territories, wages wars, defends from attack and guides the fledgling civilization through all its struggles.

Events are not random, but based on cause-and-effect relationships. The simulations starts in 4000 B.C. with a small nomadic

tribe. The game can be played on a map of the real world or on a computer-generated map. Gamers then attempt to keep their tribe alive for five to six thousand years or for 100-year periods. Historical figures encountered during play may help, but they usually hinder the efforts, as the player uses strategy against such leaders as Napoleon, Charlemagne and Ghengis Khan.

Other titles that are currently under development for MicroProse are *Darklands* (medieval German adventures), *TimeQuest* (time travel through history), *MegaTraveller 2* and *Elite Plus* (sequels) and *Hyperspeed* (an alien combat and role-playing space adventure).

Top Coin-Ops of May 1991

Figures courtesy of *RePlay* magazine, based on an earnings-opinion poll of operators.

Best Upright Videos

1. *Race Drivin'* by Atari
2. *GP Rider* by Sega
3. *Hard Drivin'* by Atari
4. *Rampart* by Atari
5. *G-Loc* by Sega
6. *Space Gun* by Taito
7. *Galaxy Force* by Sega
8. *Pit-Fighter* by Atari
9. *Final Lap* by Atari
10. *T.M.N.T. (Turtles)* by Konami

Best Coin-Op Software

1. *Street Fighter* by Capcom
2. *Sengoku* by SNK
3. *King of the Monsters* by SNK
4. *High Impact* by Williams
5. *Caveman Ninja* by Data East
6. *Final Fight* by Capcom
7. *Raiden* by Fabtek
8. *Carrier Air Wing* by Capcom
9. *Blood Bros.* by Fabtek
10. *Ghost Pilot* by SNK

Best New Videos

1. *Final Lap II* by Namco
2. *Gun Force* by Irem
3. *Mad Dog* by American Laser Games
4. *F-15* by MicroProse
5. *Laser Ghost* by Sega

Top 10 IBM PC Games for April 1991

The Software Publishers Association's hit list for April shows the best-selling IBM PC computer games and video games, based on sales by Babbages, CompUSA, Waldensoft and Electronics Boutique.

Strategic Simulation's *Eye of the Beholder* continued to dominate the computer list for its second month. On the video-game side, Konami's *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* is still in first place, with *The Simpsons* (Acclaim) hanging on to the second-place slot.

Top 10 IBM PC Games for April 1991

This Mo.	Last Mo.	Title	Publisher
1	1	*Eye of the Beholder*	SSI
2	3	*King's Quest V*	Sierra On-Line
3	2	*Space Quest IV*	Sierra On-Line
4	4	*Wing Commander*	Origin
5	6	*SimEarth*	Maxis
6	*	*W. C. Secret Mission Disk*	Origin
7	7	*SimCity*	Maxis
8	*	*Red Baron*	Sierra On-Line
9	10	*A-10 Tank Killer*	Sierra On-Line
10	8	*Flight Simulator*	Microsoft

* First month in the Top 10.

Top 10 Video Games for April 1991

This Mo.	Last Mo.	Title	Publ./System
1	1	*T.M.N.T.*	Konami/NES
2	2	*The Simpsons*	Acclaim/NES
3	6	*Super Mario Bros. 3*	Nintendo/NES
4	4	*Super Mario Land*	Nintendo/GB
5	7	*Double Dragon III*	Acclaim/NES
6	5	*Lakers Vs. Celtics*	EA/Genesis
7	9	*John Madden Football*	EA/Genesis
8	3	*NBA All Star Basketball*	LJN/GB
9	10	*Tetris*	Nintendo/NES
10	8	*Operation C*	Konami/GB

* First month in the Top 10.

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CIRCLE #103 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

continued from page 28

Silver Surfer

(Arcadia Systems for the NES)

There are three different codes that can be inserted:

- For an invincibility, input KJTTJK.
- For full weapons, input CKWJT4.
- For unlimited continues, input SJM333.

Musha

(Seismic for the Genesis)

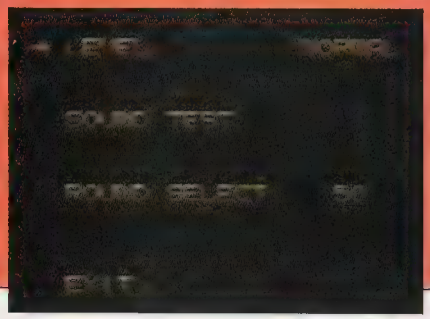
There are quite a few Easter eggs that can be performed with this game. To get a round select, press **RESET** ten times, then hold D and L and enter the option screen. Instead of a sound test, you should now see a round select.

For 20 extra options, press **START** to pause, and then press U, U, U, D, D, D, L, L, L, R, R, R, C, C, B, A.

Gain Ground

(Renovation for the Genesis)

Once you enter the option screen, move the cursor to the level, then press A, C, B, C. This will cause a round select to appear under the sound test.

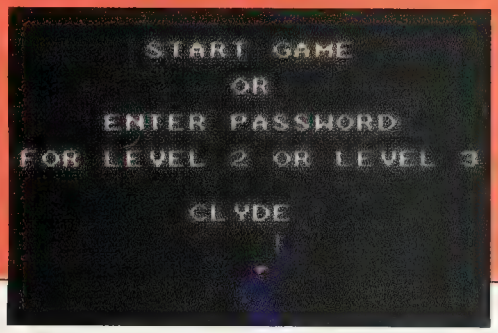


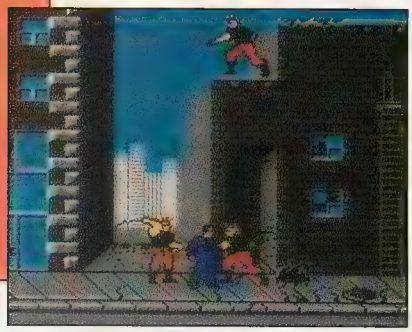
For five extra lives press **START** to pause, and then press R, D, R, D, L, U, L, U, B, C, A.

Dirty Harry

(Mindscape for the NES)

At the beginning of the game, enter the password CLYDE to get unlimited lives.





continued on page 32

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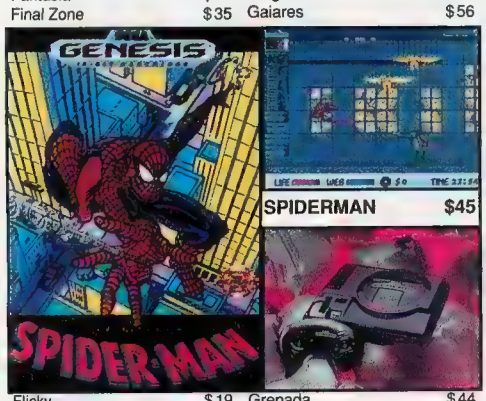

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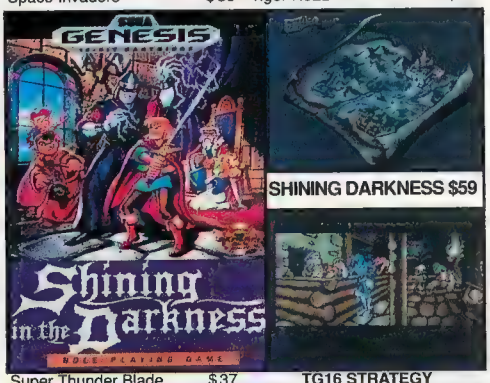

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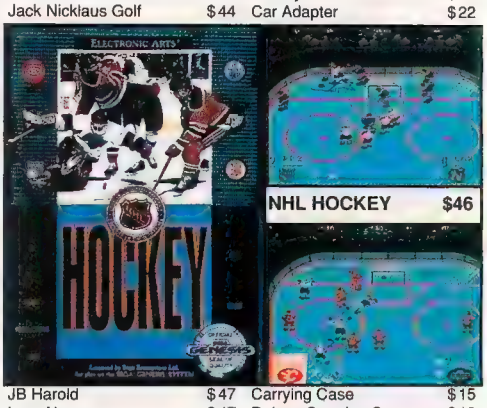

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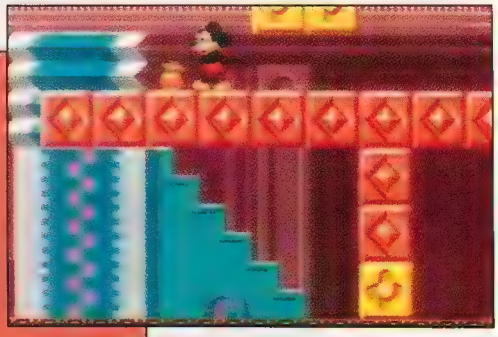
continued from page 30

Castle of Illusion

(Sega for the Genesis)



Here's another way to get the maximum number of marbles (shots) and points you want in the game. At the end of the second level in Toyland, you'll come across a bag of marbles. If you pick the bag up and proceed to the right far enough, when you go back to the left, the bag will reappear. Each time you pick the bag up, you'll receive 1,000 points and extra marbles (up to 30).

Don't forget about the vines in the second part of Level 1-1. As long as you're on the vine, you're invincible, so you can swing on the vine and get all the points you want and up to ten men. You'll average about 95,000 points an hour. (See the *Castle of Illusion* strategy in the May 1991 issue.)

Dynamite Duke

(Sega for the Genesis)

Tan Nguyen of Santa Ana, California, has found a way to enter a super-option mode that will allow you to skip levels, increase the number of lives and get ten continues. To do so, during the title screen, press **START** for the option mode to appear. Then press C ten times and the **START** button to enter the option screen. You'll now be able to choose from the new selections. Thanks, Tan, for this great Easter egg.

Valis III

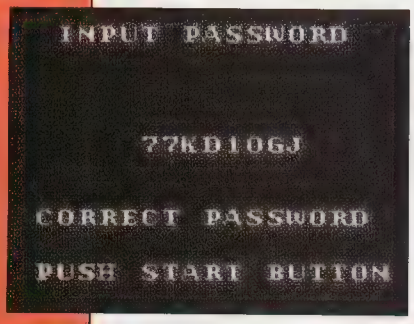
(Renovation for the Genesis)

This game comes with a stage select and a visual select mode. To get the stage select, during the title screen, press U, A, B, C and **START**. Hold down the buttons until you reach the black transition screen, then release U, A, B and C at the same time, followed by **START**. Select Map 000 will appear if done correctly.

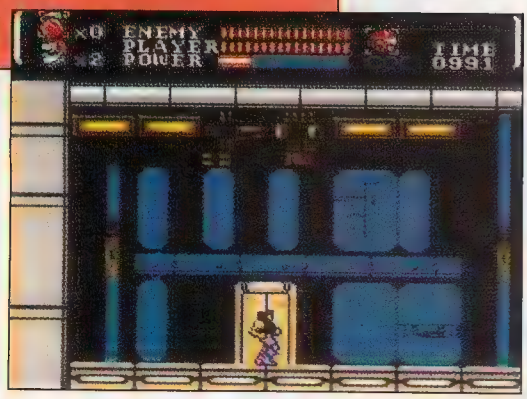
To get the visual select mode, during the title screen, press and hold A, C, U, L, and then press **START**.

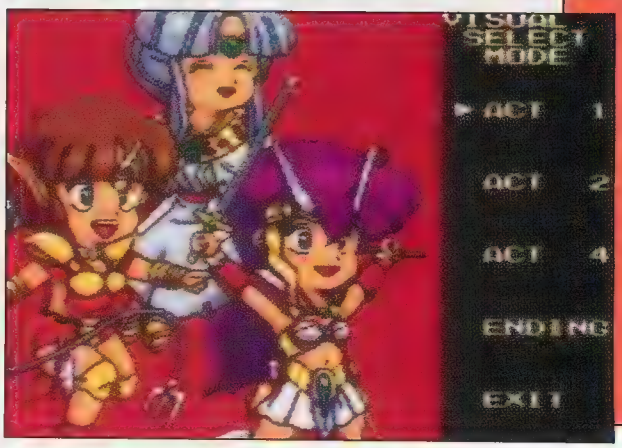
Power Blade

(Taito for the NES)



Enter this password to start on the last level: 77KD1OGJ.





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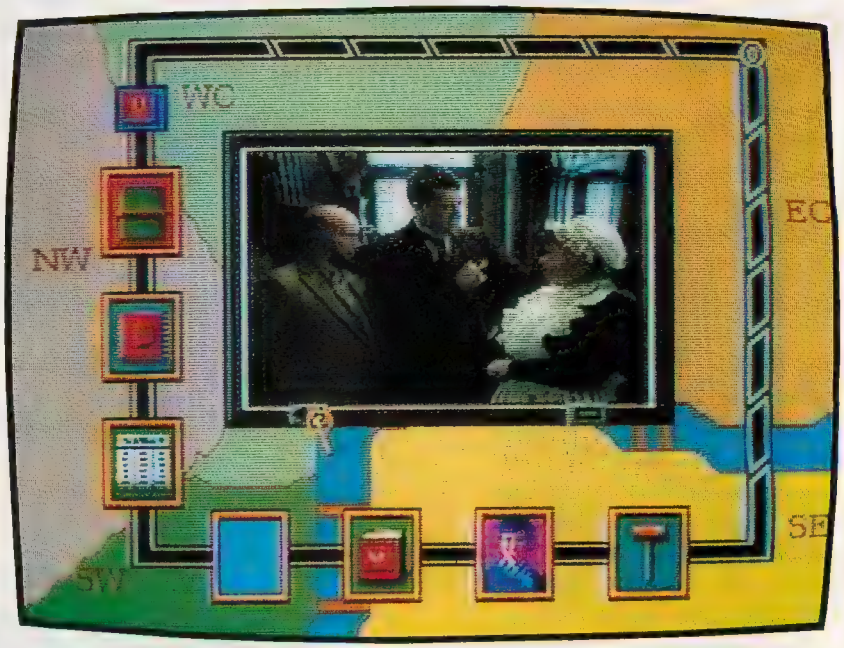

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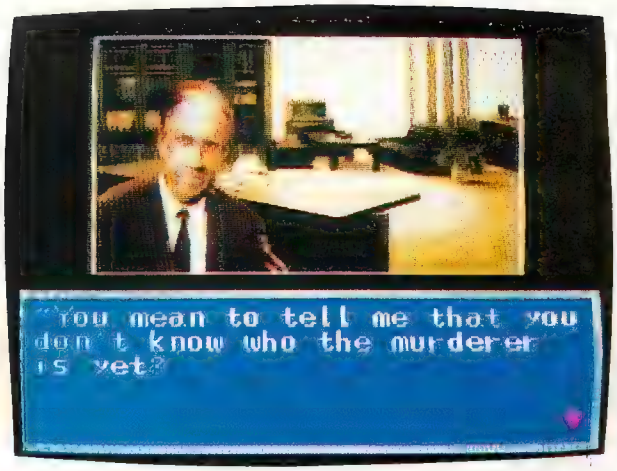

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CIRCLE #115 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

VIDEO GAME REVIEWS

Bo Jackson Baseball

DATA EAST

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

Well, we all saw this one coming. *Bo Jackson Baseball* sure sounded like a safe bet—a year ago, you couldn't have asked for a better endorsement. But if you think about it, this game could really represent a risk for Data East today.

Consider the ingredients:

• Bo Jackson—sure, he's a superstar, but as of this writing it's still possible that his hip injury will prevent him from ever playing professional sports again.

• Baseball—how many times has this sport been done on the NES alone? I lost count at about 11—not including the more esoteric stuff like *Dusty Diamond's All-Star Softball* and *Base Wars*—and there are always more on the way!

• Finally, it's for the Nintendo Entertainment System—that 8-bit workhorse that's starting to slip into the shadow of the more powerful 16-bit machines, including Nintendo's own.

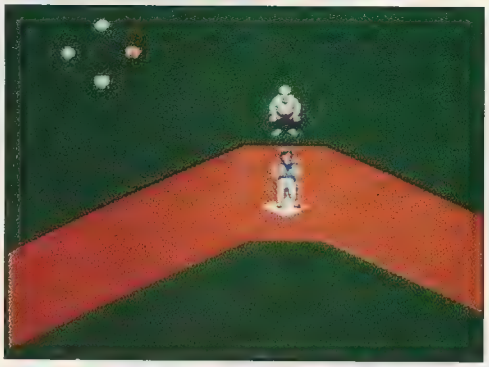
But before we send Bo back to the dugout with these three strikes against him, let's give him a fair shake. After all, *Bo Jackson Baseball* does have some nice features—and it's interesting to see subtle differences between the average Japanese-designed baseball game and this one, which was developed by Beam Software in Australia.

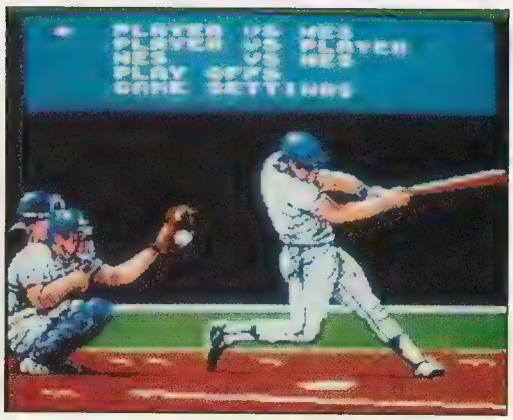
Along with the standard two-player mode and tournament options, *Bo Jackson Baseball* presents a fairly clean interpretation of America's favorite team sport. Fielding the ball is an easy task, thanks to the responsive controls, and pitching and batting have been simplified by on-screen menus that show your choices clearly. In the one-player mode, the computer proves to be a worthy opponent, attempting to steal bases frequently and throwing fewer pitches into the strike zone than the typical video-game pitcher.

Another options screen allows you to modify many of the game's variables. You can set the number of innings, turn the music on and off or even choose which viewpoint you'd like to see the pitches from—through the eyes of the pitcher or from the catcher's perspective. The music is far too repetitive to enjoy for a full nine innings, but the digitized voices are a treat. The umpire growls "STRIKE!" with such ferocity that you expect the batter's helmet to fly off from the blast, and the team managers are quick to dispute close calls on the field, barking, "He was safe by a mile!"

One of the game's strongest points is the detailed animation of the pitcher and the batter, particularly in the sequences that show the action from the catcher's point of view. The pitcher thumps the ball into his mitt a few times, casts a wary eye at any base runners and winds up for a full delivery that ends with his arm extended in an off-balance pose that should be familiar to baseball fans everywhere. These motions look like they're closely based on the movements of a real pitcher, and the batter's appearance is equally true to life. Check out the subtle change in the batter's stance as he shifts his weight before tensing up for a swing.

Detailed character animation is one of *Bo Jackson Baseball's* strongest points.





In other areas, the graphics aren't quite as perfect. From the pitcher's perspective, there's a huge backdrop behind the plate that's taller than the wall that defines the outfield. From the catcher's viewpoint, the pitcher's mound looks like it's only about 40 feet away from the plate instead of the standard 60 feet, 6 inches. In the long shots of the field, the players are stiff-legged, and the umpires look like pizza chefs.

No, I'm not going to say, "Bo Knows Nintendo." I *will* say that Beam Software and Data East know baseball, and they've made a workmanlike effort in trying to live up to the promise of a game

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with Bo's name on it. It may not clearly distinguish itself from the pack, but at least it's running neck-and-neck with most of the other NES baseball games.

—Chris Bieniek

Data East USA, Inc.
1850 Little Orchard St.
San Jose, CA 95125
(408) 286-7074

Mini-Putt

JVC

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($39.95)

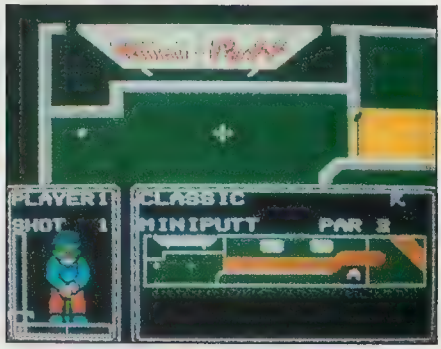
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

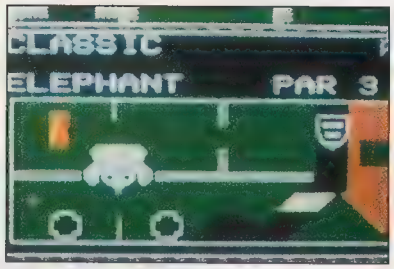
I like to get up at about 5:00 a.m. on Sundays and head on down to the miniature-golf course—early, while the dew is still on the Astroturf. There's nothing quite like the feeling one gets when selecting the perfect putter: the cold chrome shaft, only slightly misshapen, with the small, vicious wedge of steel on the business end. Then you get to pick out your ball (I always prefer the green one) and weigh it carefully to find the sweet spot. In moments, you're out on the green. At that time of day, there's never a family of four ahead of you, arguing loudly as they stroll their way through the game. Nor has the windmill begun to creak and shudder, the sure sign that a long day on the mini-putt golf course is coming to a close. And the clown with the skee-ball face at the end of the course waits patiently, mockingly, for his first victim of the day. This is the time to play miniature golf.

Adapted from Accolade's computer version, *Mini-Putt* goes a long way toward recreating the experience of miniature golf, the sport of jesters.

In real-life minigolf (sort of like saying "in real-life cartoons"), there are decorative courses with dinosaurs, loop-the-loops and barn doors and serious courses with sloped and twisted greens designed by evil people. *Mini-Putt*'s 36-hole repertoire features mostly this second type of course. Be prepared for diabolically arranged hills (some are practically mountains), valleys, bumps, troughs, trenches and traps.

There are some holes in *Mini-Putt* that could never exist in reality. For instance, the Cannon hole in one course requires you to get the ball past a WWI biplane propeller and into the mouth of a cannon, which automatically shoots the ball upwards and across to the hole (which is otherwise inaccessible). Now *this* is minigolf at its finest! There's a couple of castles, a space shuttle, an elephant, a giant cobra, tunnels, water hazards and more. Slopes are represented by fields of arrows pointing in the direction the ball will tend to roll (though the ball sometimes stops on a slope). You can also practice any hole on any course.





***Mini-Putt*, by JVC, is as silly and maddening as "real" miniature golf.**

Up to four can play at once. The method used for putting is similar to most golf video games. You place the cursor where you want the ball to end up (if it's a straight shot) or where you want to aim it (for a bank shot). You'll have to take the slopes into account, and adjust power accordingly. Precise timing is required in order to hit the fire button when the power and accuracy gauges reach the desired levels. You can also *hold* the button in order to "freeze" yourself in mid-swing; this is useful for timing your shot effectively when trying to putt past moving objects.

Since it's marked off in increments almost too small to be displayed on a TV set, the power gauge did not always seem to accurately reflect the energy imparted to the ball. This was particularly annoying in very short putts (actually tougher sometimes than the long shots), which didn't roll as far as the gauge seemed to indicate they would.

Mini-Putt lacks in graphic detail. Still, the game gets high marks. It's a good golf simulation for those who don't take golfing very seriously. It's as silly and maddening as the "real" miniature golf, and that's exactly what it should be.

—Josh Mandel

JVC Musical Industries
6363 Sunset Blvd., Suite 500
Hollywood, CA 90028
(213) 466-5927

Fantasia

SEGA

For the Sega Genesis ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	**10**
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10

When *Castle of Illusion* appeared for the Genesis, it took some people by surprise. Maybe they thought Mickey Mouse was no longer star material, but they were wrong. *Castle* is as spectacular an arcade game as has ever been seen on the home TV screen: brilliantly painted and animated, with infectious game play. It's only natural to expect even more from the second Disney/Sega collaboration, *Fantasia*. What a pleasure to report that *Fantasia* is not only as good as *Castle*, it's better—longer and tougher, with

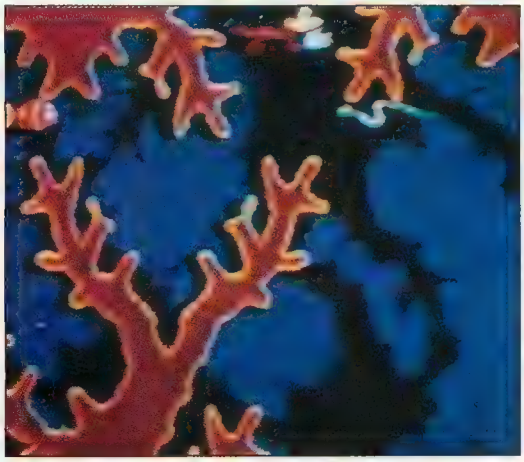
more surprises, hair-tearing twists, superb music and top-notch animation than its predecessor. Better still, it's significantly *different* than *Castle*, so nobody will feel like they're playing a continuation of the same game.

Fantasia follows the spirit of the classic Disney film perfectly. Mickey, in his sorcerer's apprentice robes, has fallen asleep. While he dozes, the Master's musical notes are scattered throughout the world of Fantasia by an evil wind blowing down from Bald Mountain. Mickey must retrieve all the notes so that the orchestra can play once more. To do so, he'll run and jump over a wide variety of dangerous dreamscapes, many of which you'll recognize from the film, though some were created specifically for the game.

What makes *Fantasia* so different from *Castle*? First, it's more difficult...*far* more difficult. I was shocked when I sat down to play for the first time, expecting to ace the first level and running out of lives within seconds instead. The *Fantasia* world is populated with so many jumping, flying and galloping creatures, you'll have to be on your toes every second of the way. Even in easy mode, this game is of adult-level difficulty. Young children need not apply.

Second, the flavor of the art is different. The backgrounds are noticeably less detailed than in *Castle*, but the animation is much more fluid. Mickey's teetering, for example, is more elaborate; his arms flail frantically, he sweats and if you don't get him on solid ground quickly, he falls! Multiplane scrolling is also utilized less than in *Castle*, but is actually used as a strategic impediment. Large objects pass in *front* of the action, blocking the view temporarily (and seemingly at all the worst times). Everything sparkles; look carefully and you'll see that almost every screen is full of twinkling reflections of fire, starlight, crystal and water.

Third, the construction of the game is entirely unlike *Castle*'s. There are no bosses to speak of, and if Mickey reaches the end of the level without finding the requisite number of musical notes, he's thrown back into the same level until he completes it. Though he can eliminate the marauding creatures—brooms carrying buckets, mushrooms, flying books and dozens more—by bouncing on them (some of them take two or more bounces to eliminate), he can also cast magical spells. There are doors that lead to bonus rooms, fairies that can knock you back or take you to new sublevels and many items to find along the way to increase your magical strength or endurance.



Sega's *Fantasia* follows the spirit of the Disney film perfectly.

Music obviously plays an enormous role in the game. Nearly every classical work used in the film is present in the game (with the noteworthy exception of the film's finale, "Ave Maria"). The orchestrations seem a little thinner than in other Genesis games, but the variety is fantastic.

There are hundreds of little details in *Fantasia* that I could go on and on about—but you'll just have to see them for yourself. Mickey and I have some serious mushroom butt to kick.

—J. M.

Sega of America
573 Forbes Blvd.
South San Francisco, CA 94080
(415) 742-9300

Bill & Ted's Excellent Video Game Adventure

LJN

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($47.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

This latest offering from movie-licensing happy LJN is its second based on a motion picture with a time-traveling storyline. Its

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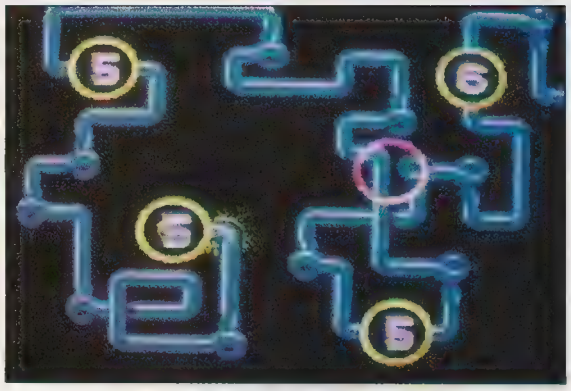
first, *Back to the Future Part II & III*, proved that a movie-inspired video-game's game play didn't have to be derived from the actual film itself—simply create *another* scrolling game for the player's enjoyment.



This time around, LJN redeems itself somewhat by sticking to the premise of the *Bill & Ted's Excellent Adventure* movie—two "valley dudes" who travel through time in a telephone booth and kidnap famous folks throughout history. In the game, Bill and Ted have to find the likes of Cleopatra, Rembrandt and Elvis and bring them back to the time from whence they originally came.

Rebels from the future world of Bill and Ted's time guardian, Rufus, have kidnapped these historically significant people and scattered them over five time periods. Everyone must be returned to where he or she belongs, or else the future in which Bill and Ted are demigods won't ever exist. The fact that their music has helped to bring about world harmony and the perfect alignment of the planets will never occur.

Undoing the rebels' admirable efforts, you play both Bill and Ted through six levels. In each one, you must talk with locals to get clues and items to help in your search. First, you have to find an object ("historical bait") that is used to lure the legendary figure once you find him or her. Without this item, the person won't go back home with you.

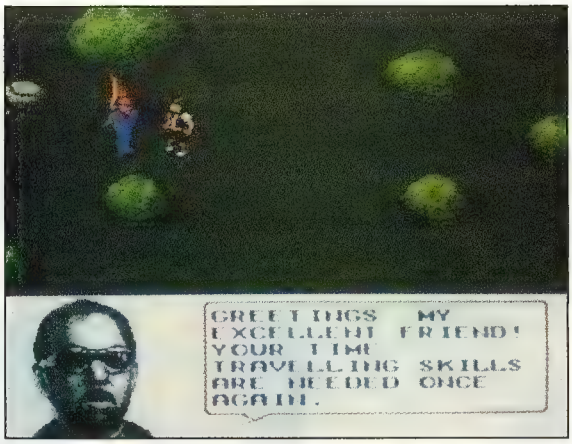
You alternate between the two characters throughout the six levels. At the end of every level, a password is given to continue, and Bill and Ted hold a concert. The higher the level completed, the bigger and better their performance becomes.

Buildings to enter in each of the five time periods often will present Bill or Ted somebody inside to talk to. You select Bill's or Ted's response from three choices. If what you make Bill or Ted say pleases the person being spoken to, a clue will be given. If, on the other hand, you irk him or her, the locals outside might turn aggressive and throw you in jail if they catch you.

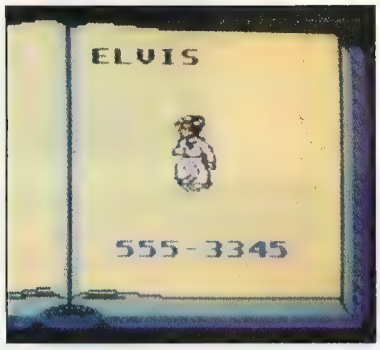
To fend off attacking folks, you can throw a "good stuff" object. Dropping a pudding cup will attract the people to it. A boom box entices them to dance. A firecracker will blow up unfortunates within its vicinity, but dropping a history textbook will cause everybody on

the screen to disappear as they are wiped out of existence.

Other objects to note are the horses and canoes that Bill and Ted can ride and certain areas in buildings that allow them to warp from one place to another. Oddly, the time machine phone booth is always conveniently available and is listed in the inventory screen. (Bill and Ted *carry* it with them all the time?) Telephone numbers of historical figures are dialed to get to where a person is.



Bill & Ted's Excellent Video Game Adventure clearly fits into the adventure-gaming category. The 3-D perspective graphics are good, but—sin of all video-game sins—actual game play is dull. All you are ever really doing is searching, searching and searching. You search for clues to search for historical bait and people. You ride horses and canoes to get to areas to search. Conflicts are there to simply put you on the defensive.



The selecting of different responses when conversing with people is unique but hardly necessary. Usually one of the three responses is the only important thing you need to say. The other two either tick them off or cause them to tell you to get lost, whereupon the townsfolk outside take to beating on you and then throw you in jail.

It's also aggravating to select the wrong bait once you locate a historical person. Again, you'll be thrown in jail and have to start your search for that person all over again. There's a lesson to be learned here: When traveling through time, don't make people mad by talking like an idiot or giving them inappropriate gifts. You'll be thrown in jail.

The verbose Bill and Ted themselves would likely describe this adventure of theirs as being "bogus," but what we get can be best called average. Try before you buy, most triumphant dudes.

—Howard H. Wen

LJN
1 Spring St.
Oyster Bay, NY 11771
(516) 922-2428

Yo, Bro

NEC

For the TurboGrafx-16 ($61.99)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

Yo! Now, all you radical types have a chance to hop on your skateboards and make the streets of Santa Cruz (and other locales) safe for all the righteous dudes. And what a task that'll be. The streets are loaded with innocent bystanders, kids who are better off home than wandering around as targets for every dastardly menace that can crawl from

ToeJam and Earl™ are trying to get away from the weirdest creatures in the universe.

a sand dune or drop from the sun-drenched sky. It's up to you to skate the streets, sending these kids home and killing off the troublemakers.

As you roll from one West Coast locale to the next, you must face off against killer bees, baby dinosaurs, aliens, man-eating plants and even killer rabbits, just to mention a few of the creepy cruds you'll meet. Each creature has its own way of attacking. Some even breed, forcing you to find the "mother" organisms quickly, and then backtrack to rid the town of all the offspring.

No one said hunting meanies was an unrewarding experience, though. When you kill creatures, prizes are left behind. Sometimes the prizes are little more than servings of junk food that increase your score. Other times, you'll be able to scoop up more powerful loads for your slingshot or grab hearts that refill your wipe-out meter.

Did he say "wipe out"? Yep. You start the game with a specific number of lives (set from the options screen), each of which can wipe out eight times before meeting the grim reaper. Hitting creatures is a sure way to wipe out, but the streets themselves are filled with natural obstacles such as puddles and pot holes, any of which can knock you on your well-tanned butt. Whatever you do, don't skate into deep water. It's instant death.

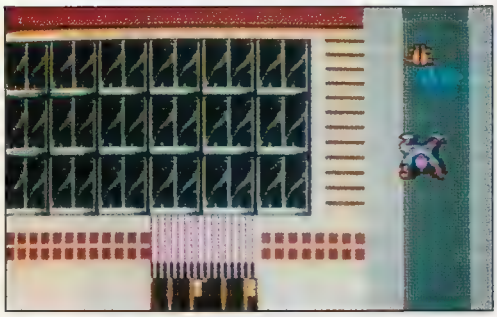
Gamers playing *Yo, Bro* will have to face off against killer bees, baby dinosaurs, and even aliens.

If you are slow finding all the kids, the villains will destroy them, one by one, in sundry, horrible ways. You have no time to spare. As if saving the town's kids isn't enough, take too long with a level, and you'll also have to dodge bombs tossed off-screen by some unknown dweeb. Luckily, the on-screen compass arrow will help you quickly locate the nearest targets.

The controls for *Yo, Bro* are a little clumsy at first. It takes time to get used to maneuvering the skateboard. It's especially difficult to line up for your shots, since the skateboard, as one would expect, tends to keep rolling. Acquiring

Earthlings.

the skill to stop and turn with any degree of accuracy takes a lot of practice.



The graphics are disappointing. The TurboGrafx-16 is capable of much more detailed scenes than those incorporated into this game. Still, the skateboard animation is convincing, even if the backgrounds over which you skate are less than lush. Also, the sound effects are ordinary. However, as you play, you get treated to competently arranged Beach Boys' classics. I can't think of a more appropriate soundtrack.

In summary, *Yo, Bro* is basically a shoot-'em-up, but the California scenario and the skateboarding action take it slightly outside that genre. Although the game takes some getting used to, once you master the control mechanism, you should have hours of fun tracking down West Coast baddies. What could be more hip?

—Clayton Walnum

NEC Home Electronics, Inc.
1255 Michael Drive
Wood Dale, IL 60191
(708) 860-9500

Smash TV

ACCLAIM

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($47.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

Goodies, guts and glory—all prime ingredients of what in the year 1999 has become the world's favorite TV game show: *Smash TV*. Williams released the arcade version last year, and it quickly became a hit. *Smash TV* combines the game play of the classic *Robotron* and a violent game-show theme similar to the movie *The Running Man* to provide a unique contest for either one or two players (simultaneously).

"Big Money!, Big Prizes!—I Love It!" is the opening cry from your host as the contestants proceed into the first battle area. There are four different areas in the NES version, each consisting of several different

Check it out. ToeJam and Earl are two hip hoppin' aliens in a most serious jam. They're stuck on Earth. So keep your eyes and ears peeled for a couple of rappin' aliens gettin' busy in a new game. Only on Genesis. They'll be the ones getting chased by the mad dentist, the crazed shopper, a nerd herd and every other Earth-freak around. You can't miss 'em.

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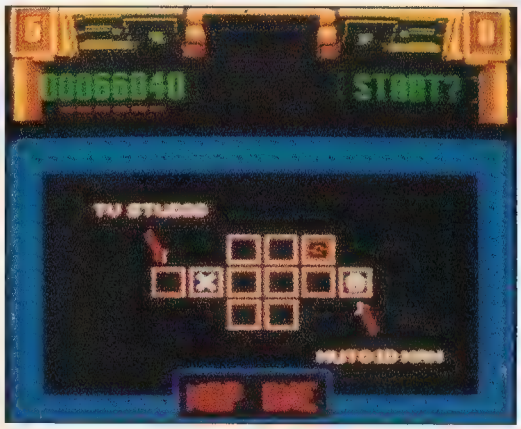
rooms interconnected by doorways. A map appears at the beginning of each area that shows how the rooms are connected, where bonus rooms full of extra prizes are located, as well as where the boss is located. Your object as a contestant is to move from room to room collecting cash, prizes, extra men and weapons while blasting literally hundreds of mindless drones into dog food along the way. All of the aforementioned items appear randomly for a limited time before they disappear. As prizes are gathered (they appear in the form of gift boxes), a small window near your score displays what each prize is.

A bar graph located below your score indicates how many shots you have left with your current weapon, before your standard shots are restored. Only one weapon power-up may be used at any one time, but other power-ups (such as force fields or extra speed) may be used at the same time. Most of the power-ups from the original game are present, with only a few weapons missing.

When the boss room is reached, things start to really get hairy. These guys aren't friendly and take quite a bit of punishment before kicking off. At this point, your contestant(s) comes back to the main area for bonus points based on all the cash and prizes accumulated before heading off into the next area to face new, more difficult drones and challenges in his quest for more toasters, VCRs, TVs and new cars.



Acclaim's *Smash TV* manages to capture the essence of the game play that made the arcade version a success.

The arcade incarnation of *Smash TV* was quite impressive in regards to its beautiful graphics and great sound. Translating all the features of the game to the NES is quite a challenge, but Acclaim has done better than I'd have thought possible. While there isn't the visual splendor of entrails and eyeballs flying skyward when your character or a boss gets trashed, everything is displayed adequately enough. I was really worried about the problems of flickering, what with so many critters on-screen at the same time, but they seem to have been able to avoid the problem for the most part; the graphics remain intact the vast majority of the time.

"I'll buy that for a dollar," and the other comments made by the host, appear to have been taken directly from the original, but come out somewhat scratchy on the NES, most likely due to memory restrictions. They are easily understood, however, and all the other sound effects and music, while not taken directly from the original, sound just fine.

Something that most of you familiar with the coin-op version will want to know is how they managed to get two eight-way joysticks crammed into one NES pad. Two control schemes are available, depending upon your hardware setup. If you have the standard two pads, you can either use one or both of them when playing one player, or have each player use a single pad in two-player mode.

When using one controller, the control pad is used for movement, with one button used to fire in the direction you are moving and the other button used to fire continuously in the last direction you moved. Sound complicated? Try doing it—it takes a bit of getting used to and can be deadly if you mess up when the heat is on.

The second way, using both controllers, is much easier. You simply hold each controller with the pad portion at the top: use one pad to move and the other to fire. If you want to do this in the two-player mode, you will need an adapter (like the NES Satellite) that allows you to hook up four controllers. (And you thought you would never see a game that played better with the pad than with the bigger controllers!)

All in all, the NES version manages to capture the essence of *Smash TV*, with the same game play that made the arcade version a success. There is plenty of challenge and difficulty— sorry, no continues—to keep even the best blasting for a while. If you liked it in the arcade, you should enjoy Acclaim's translation!

—Brent Walker

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Wurm: Journey to the Center of the Earth

ASMIK

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($44.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10

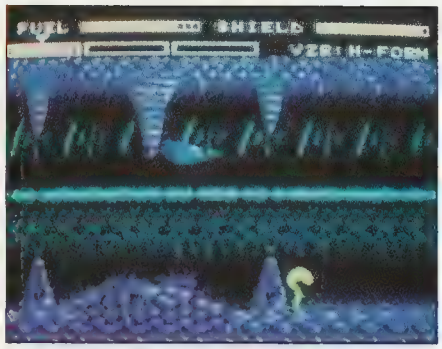
Did you ever wonder whether there really was such a place as the fabled city of Atlantis? Or whether there might be a hidden civilization deep in the bowels of the Earth, waiting for a chance to make claim to the surface? In *Wurm*, you will find answers to the above questions, and more.

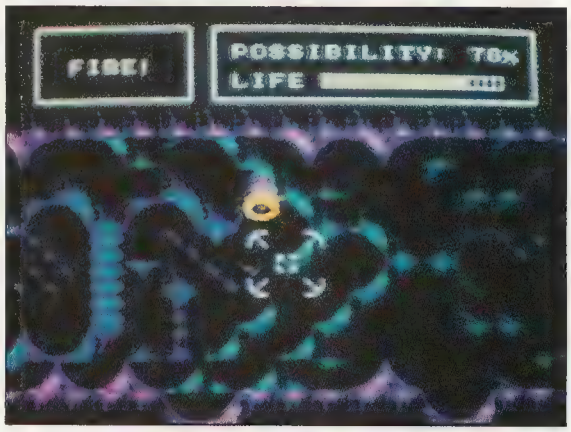
As our story begins, you are exploring an underground area, traveling through tunnels and vaporizing the occasional critter that gets in the way, when an earthquake hits. You have lost contact with the surface, and one of your other ships is missing without a trace. Your ship isn't damaged, but afterwards you pick up signs of a massive life-form on radar. Using the ship's crew, you must find the weaknesses of the beast and succeed in dispatching it before your search continues.

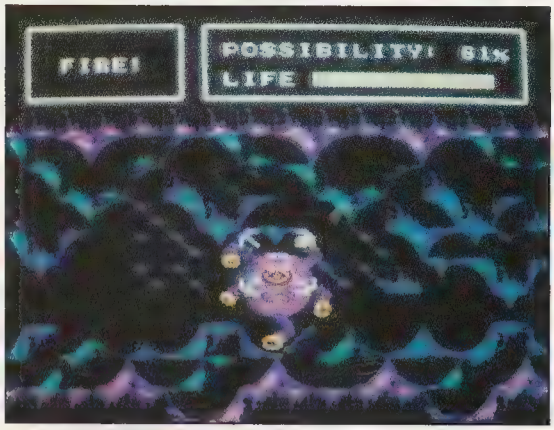
When you start to find hints of a hidden alien civilization, as well as tougher life-forms showing up, things become more complicated. There are plenty of questions, but the answers are buried deep below and aren't easy to come by. Your missions are to rescue your missing craft and crew members and find out where these aliens are coming from, and what they want.

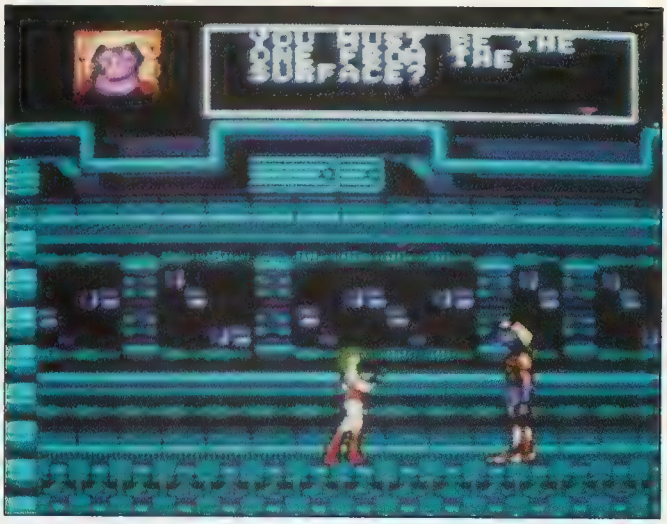
There are five stages to *Wurm*, each of which has several distinct parts to it. Action first starts with a typical horizontally scrolling shooter area. Afterwards, things may vary in order. Generally, a vertically scrolling shooter area will also appear, then an exploration sequence and then a life-form identification/destruction sequence. The exploration sequence has a crew member outside of your ship searching for missing crew members in a multi-level horizontally scrolling maze area. The maze isn't the challenge. It's fairly simple. The work lies in using your ammo wisely and making it last long enough to either find the crew member or bad guy or to escape.

The one truly different section of the game is the identification/destruction portion. Using your available crew members, who will vary considerably, you must try to identify what type of creature you are facing, and try and determine its weak spot so that you may destroy it. By questioning the different crew members, your identification possibility percentage will either go up or down, depending on which crew member you ask. Additional life points are also awarded to keep your strength up as you battle, but again, the proper crew member must be asked, or you could lose points. After a certain number of questions, you must battle the creature for a while, and any damage inflicted will go toward raising the identification percentage. Again, you must consult your crew. When your percentage hits 100%, it just takes one hit on the creature to dispatch it before you are off into the next area.









In the horizontal and vertical shooter areas, you are able to choose from different types of ships as action progresses. Your basic ship has minimal firepower, but has a huge drill on its nose to enable you to cruise through solid areas without damage. Other ships with higher firepower (but no drill) are also available and may be switched at will anytime during these sequences.

I know that some of you may have been waiting for the release of this game, but you may be disappointed. Although there are a few areas where things get a bit difficult, overall the game is just simply too easy. The first time that I sat down and seriously played the game, I was able to finish it in under two hours—and that was without a glance at an instruction booklet. Unlimited continues and a password given after each stage contributed. That in itself wouldn't be such an issue if there was serious challenge with enjoyment along the way, but there isn't. There are times in the scrolling shooter areas where you don't even have to fire or move; just cruise as fast as you can toward the end and you will survive. I only felt challenged in this portion of the game once, and even then, it only took a few tries to get past the section.

Visually, things aren't too exciting. Again, there are some better areas, but overall it's bland, repeating the same background over and over with little change.

Wurm has a good concept behind it, but perhaps it could use a bit of tweaking

Enjoy Hudson

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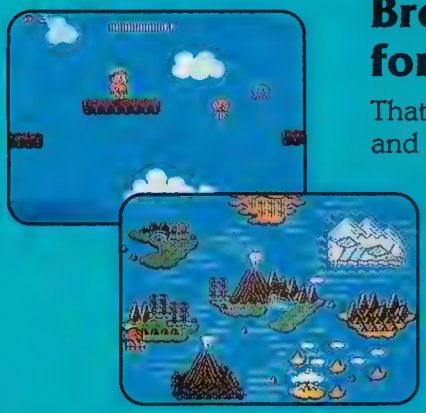

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here and there. More experienced players will knock this one out quickly, but I think that perhaps younger players would get some enjoyment out of it.

—B. W.

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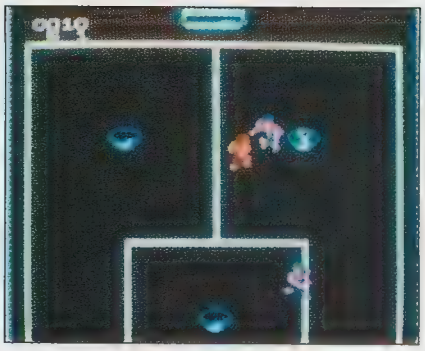


American Gladiators

GAMETEK

For the Nintendo Entertainment System ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	**5**	6	7	8	9	10

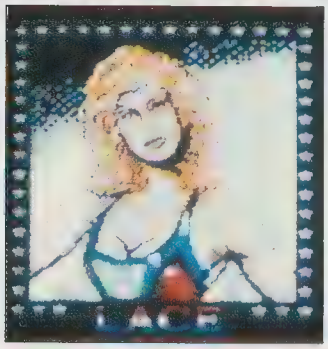
It was inevitable that an NES game based on the TV game show *American Gladiators* would appear. After all, Nintendo itself spends millions of dollars advertising on this show (it even "sponsors" some of the events on *American Gladiators*, which you can see by its familiar logo on the scoreboard).

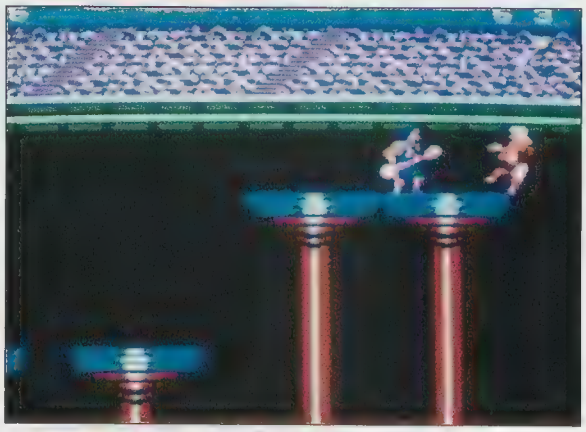
For those who are television illiterate, here's the deal: Contestants engage in physical events and go through obstacle courses while being hindered by any number of American Gladiators—big, tough guys and gals with the physiques of bodybuilders and the hammy attitudes of pro wrestlers. The contestants themselves aren't wimps, either. With physically demanding professions in the armed services, firefighting and high-school teaching, most are formidable challengers.

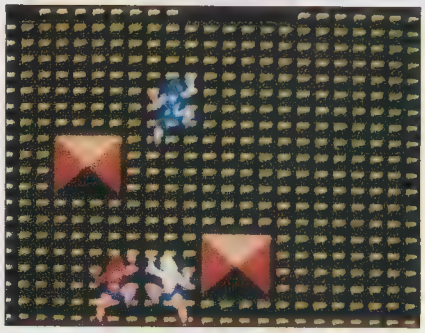
Lesser beings who don't keep in shape watch in the stadium stands (the show is part of the Universal Studios Hollywood tour). Members of the audience cheer their favorite American Gladiator and wave handmade signs showing their support. (Yes, they *make* signs—there's a cult following for this show.)

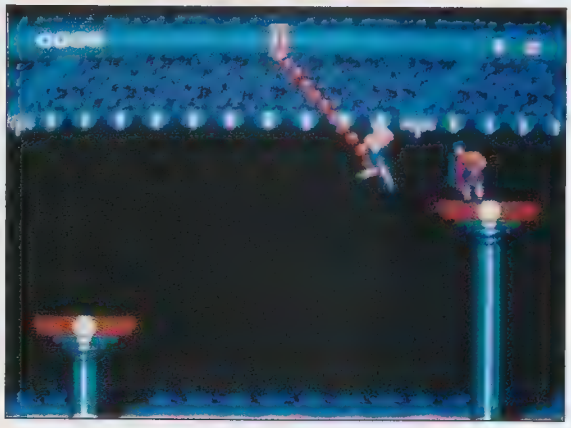
Now, with the NES game, anyone can challenge the likes of American Gladiators Gemini, Gold and Laser. Five events inspired by the ones in the television show are presented. You select one and then, once you complete the event, choose any of the remaining. Completing all five challenges will take you to the next difficulty level. The events remain the same, but now your gladiator opponents are tougher and meaner.

The well-known joust contest is like the stick fight you saw in the movie *Robin Hood: Prince of Thieves* between Robin Hood and Little John. You and a gladiator fight on top of platforms by whacking one another with what look like giant cotton swabs. Once you knock the first gladiator off the platform, you move your player to the right, jumping onto other platforms to face another. There are four gladiators to beat this way.









The human cannonball involves platforms and four more gladiators to knock off their pedestals. But here you jump onto a swinging rope. Precise timing is needed to make your player let go of the rope in order to collide with the gladiator. Otherwise, your opponent will raise his pillow-shield to block you.

In powerball, you run back and forth on a mini-soccer field in order to dunk soccer balls into five baskets, one at a time, while dodging three gladiators. The assault is a race to the finish line with a gladiator shooting tennis balls at you from a mobile tank. You can either avoid his shots or, once you pick up a tennis ball bazooka gun, fire back at him. The wall is the toughest event. Your player has to scale a wall within 100 seconds. Coming into contact with a barrier or a gladiator sent out to get you will cause your player to lose his or her grip and fall.

Problems arise immediately once you start to play *American Gladiators*. The first thing you'll notice is the poor graphics. Nowhere is this more evident than in the joust. The battling gladiators are too small. They take up roughly less than 20% of the game screen. Platforms and an indistinguishable background audience fill the rest. "Primitive" is the only way to describe the other events—a more accurate adjective doesn't exist. The color palette is limited. Its scheme is reminiscent of the way early Apple II games looked. Needless to say, the digitized pictures of real-life gladiators Nitro, Gemini, Lace, Laser and Gold are below standards. These American Gladiators do not look like what a real gladiator should look like.

Game play is just as bad. It is neither diverse nor challenging. It doesn't take long to complete each of the five events. Higher levels of play merely present tougher gladiator opponents, with the exception of the wall contest (by far, the best-playing of the events). There's a password option to continue from your present difficulty level.

You'd think there would be an option where a second player could play the opposing gladiators. I thought so, too, since it makes perfect sense, but there isn't. A second person can play only as a separate contestant. Two players never get to face off in a final obstacle course, like in the TV show.

There's one thing that's satisfying. It's hearing a

gladiator's screams once you knock him off his platform. Their digitized cries are overdone to the point of unintended hilarity.

—H. H. W.

GameTek
2999 N.E. 191st St., Suite 800
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Spider-Man

SEGA

For the Sega Genesis ($54.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

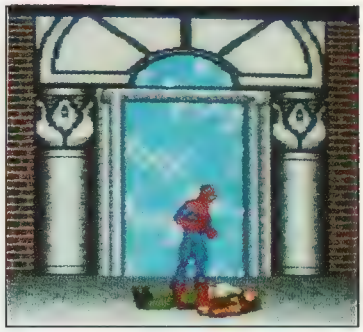
Read any good comic books lately? The next time you're thumbing through a Marvel comic, take a close look at the advertisements—you'll probably find that half of the ad pages feature video-game products. Obviously, there are a lot of people who read comics and play video games, and we haven't seen too many 16-bit games that exploit the connection. Now, after an unusually long delay, Marvel's most recognizable hero has come to the Genesis in a big way.

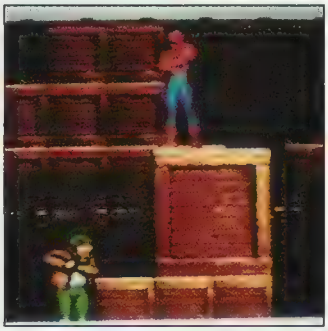
Sega's *Spider-Man* (or *Spider-Man Vs. The Kingpin*, as the game's title screen has it) puts you in the webbed red boots of your favorite wall crawler as he battles his way through a veritable who's who of classic Marvel villains, including Electro, the Lizard, Dr. Octopus and the Kingpin himself.

The attention to detail in this game is refreshing—it's faithful to the comic book in almost every respect. (One small gripe: In the comics, Spidey rarely uses his webbing as a weapon for striking his enemies, though he has demonstrated this ability on occasion.)

Until recently, Marvel has not been known to pay careful attention to the quality of licensed products based on their characters, so in that sense the game's accuracy is even more of a surprise. The intermissions are particularly good at illustrating how Spider-Man's cocky, wisecracking exterior contrasts with the neuroses of Peter Parker, the guy inside the red-and-blue tights.

Here's another example: Comics fans know that Parker supported himself for many years by working as a freelance photographer for a local newspaper, and most of the photos he sold were shots of Spider-Man that were taken by his remote-control camera. The game incorporates this idea beautifully—first with an opening scene where Spidey scales the *Daily Bugle* building, then by allowing you to pause and take pictures of the villains as you face them throughout the game.





At the end of each level, the screen shows you how your photographs turned out and tells you how much money you've earned from selling them to the *Bugle*. Spidey uses this money to buy the chemical components of his web fluid, so it's important to choose your subjects carefully—photos of nastier enemies like the Sandman or the Hobgoblin are worth quite a bit of money. And if you're familiar with LJN's excellent version of *Spider-Man* for the Game Boy, you know the importance of web fluid: You can use your webs to strike bad guys, swing from rooftops and ceilings and, in the Sega version, you can spin a shield of webbing that protects you from harm for a short time.

Spider-Man earns high marks in the audio-visual department. Spidey and his enemies look great, and nearly every level makes effective use of the Genesis' trademark multi-plane scrolling capabilities. The sound is equally good—effects are realistic and appropriate, and the music captures the character's mystique with a subtle blend of throbbing bass lines and quirky synthesizer tones.

If the game has a flaw, it's the inclusion of scenes that show Spider-Man punching out police officers. There doesn't seem to be any reason for such an unnecessary lapse in good taste. Fortunately, the rest of the game's plot is well-constructed and exciting; I doubt that many people will give these brief sequences a second thought. *continued on 116*

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The National Arbor Day Foundation

A PLAYER'S GUIDE TO Déjà Vu

BY CLAYTON WALNUM

ILLUSTRATION BY ALAN HUNTER

You wake up in a bathroom stall with a horrible headache and puncture marks on your arms. As you dazedly look around you, you realize that, not only do you not know where you are, you don't even know *who* you are! Investigating your surroundings, you suspect that something rotten is afoot. When corpses start showing up, you begin to wonder: Could you possibly be a murderer?

In this follow-up to the excellent *Shadowgate*, it's up to you to solve one of the most heinous crimes ever committed. Danger waits at every corner, and if you don't walk right, you may wind up in prison—or even dead.

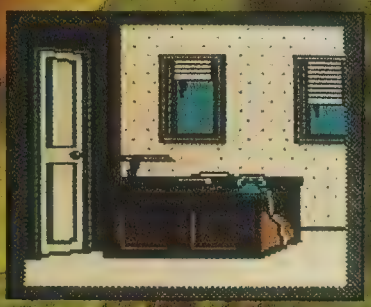
In the pages that follow, we offer all you Nintendo detectives help in solving this electronic murder mystery. But be warned: You should read the following only after you've attempted to play the game on your own. Most of the fun of a computer adventure is solving the puzzles yourself.

Happy sleuthing!

When you start your adventure, you wake up in a bathroom stall. Maybe the coat can offer some clues.

What a dingy place! Luckily, it has a mirror.

As you move from room to room, examine everything, even pictures hanging on a wall.



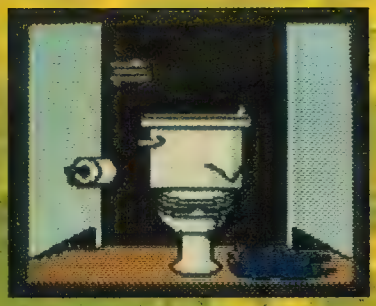
This desk probably contains useful items.

Yikes! A murder victim! Could you possibly be a murderer? Better check the desk and the body for clues. You also need to find the combination to the safe, although it's not in this room.

This town is loaded with muggers. You can fight them if you want, but sometimes it's just as easy to give them money.

Be careful how you use your gun. The police don't take kindly to people who leave bodies laying around the streets.

The face in the mirror gives you a strange feeling of déja vu.



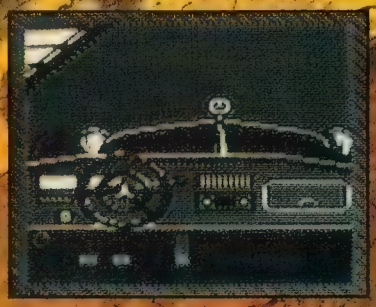
Hmm. Looks like there may have been a struggle here.

This looks like a dangerous place. Check everything, including the bottles on the window sill and the trash can.

You need to increase your stash of quarters if you're going to make it through the game. Use the slot machine on the right. But save your game first, just in case you lose your shirt.

One bottle here is special. If you can get it to move, you'll get a surprise.

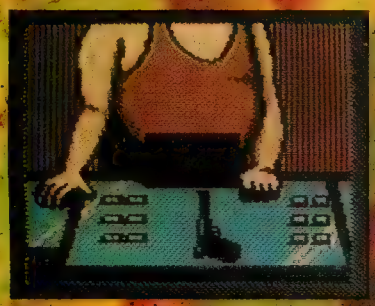
What a great car! If only you had the key.



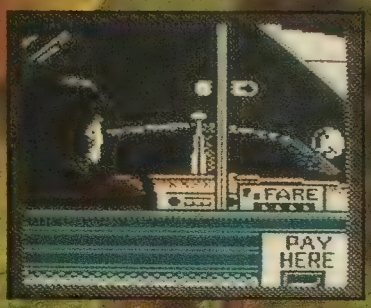
You always wanted a Mercedes, but I wouldn't try to start this one—at least not before I saved my game. Gee, could there be anything interesting in the glove compartment?

It's not nice to hit a woman. But, it's different if the woman carries a gun.

It's also not nice to go through a woman's purse. But, hey, who's going to know?



You can buy guns and ammo here. But don't get too rough with this guy. He keeps his own fire power under the counter.



After you add a couple of addresses to your address book, you'll want to take a cab ride or two.

These special private elevators frequently use high-tech keys.

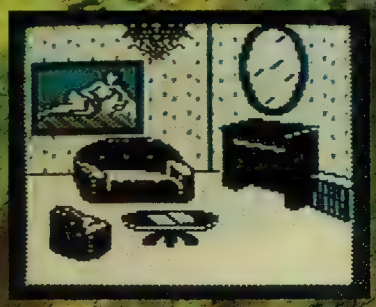
If you have the right key, you'll have no trouble getting into Dr. Brody's office.

Hey! Lots of medicine here. The file cabinet is locked, but a little force might get it open.

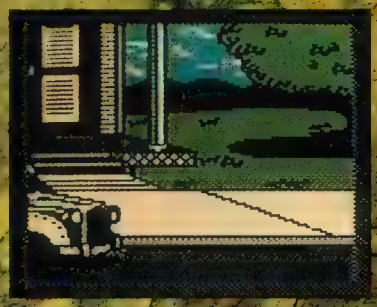
With the evidence building up against you, this is the last place you want to go.

Any one character in the game may have important information. Make sure you talk to everyone you see.

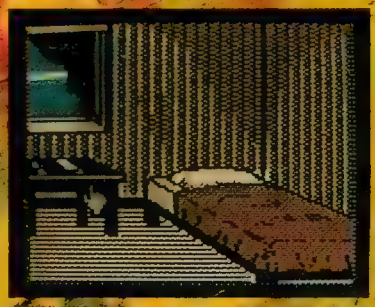
Even a wino in an alley may have a tale to tell.



Remember to examine everything you can.



The door to this house won't even budge. Maybe a little lead will loosen the lock up—and I'm not referring to a pencil!



There are lots of useful items both in and on this night table.

Uh-oh. Looks like someone is waiting for you in this office. Before using your key, maybe you'd better take care of the intruder first.

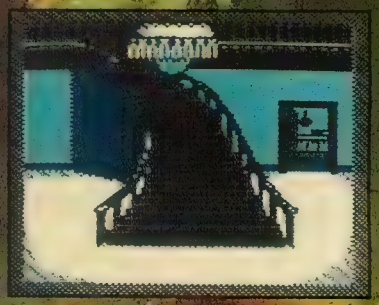
The detective's office can bring on a fatal case of déjà vu. But if you take the right kind of medicine, those dangerous, hidden memories will rise from your subconscious. Medicine, of course, must be taken in a capsule.

In the detective's office, the file cabinet contains some goodies.

Whoa! Another mugger! If you had paid the first one, you wouldn't be having these difficulties. You can punch the guy out for a temporary reprieve, but he'll keep coming back until you give him some dough.

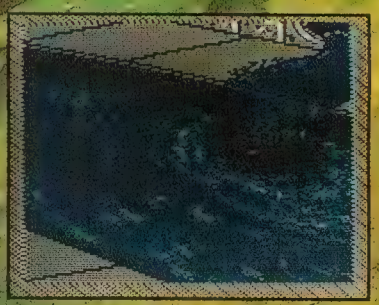
This mansion holds some helpful secrets. I wonder if there's any mail?

The butler looks grim. A good punch in the head will soften his hard-headed attitude.



After the butler is out of the way, you have free run of the house.

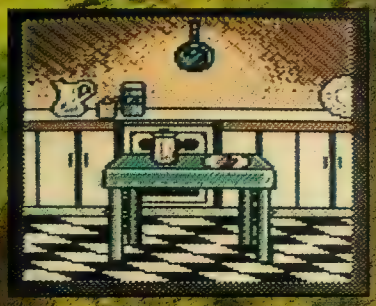
The sewer is a good place to get rid of incriminating evidence. But watch out for the alligators.



Once you find the deepest part of the sewer, you get to throw unwanted items into the water, where they can never be found. Some items can also be burned using your lighter.

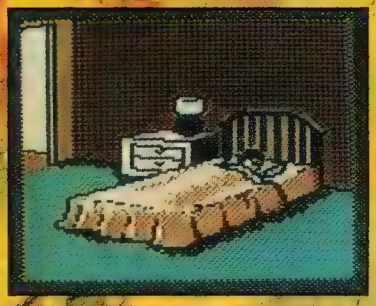
Now that you have the combination, the safe is easy to open. You'll find some good stuff inside.

This unconscious woman has a tale to tell. But before she can talk, the gag must be removed, and she must be given the right kind of medicine.



The kitchen is loaded with objects you can take—all of them are useless.

This sleeping beauty will talk in her sleep—if she gets a dose of the right medicine.



Another sleeping mumbler. Don't forget to check the night stand.

When you've destroyed all the evidence against you and acquired the evidence needed to convict the real culprits, the cops will clear you of all charges.

Doesn't it feel great to have gotten rid of that awful feeling of deja vu?

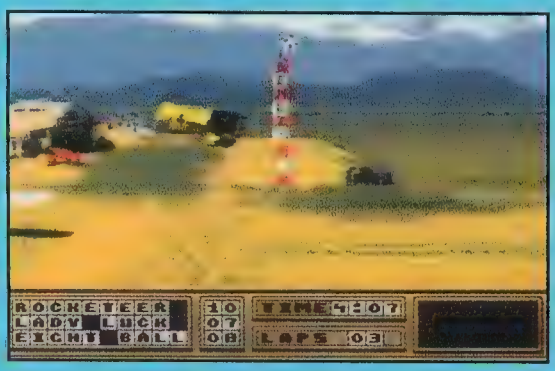
ROCKETEERING ACRO

ROCKET

Once again, we are being bombarded and saturated with a media blitzkrieg of coverage on one of the summer's hottest silver screen releases. About this time each year, it seems that all you see or hear on TV or read in the paper is some movie critic's review of Hollywood's latest. Gamers can almost be certain that if a movie is an action-packed adventure, it'll wind up as either a computer or video game (or even in some cases as both) down the road.

This year's offering, *The Rocketeer*, brought to us by the folks at Walt Disney Pictures, evolved from an obscure comic book character that was created back in 1981 by Los Angeles artist Dave Stevens.

By now, most of you have probably seen the movie or have heard what the story line is about, but for the few who haven't, here is a brief recap. Set in 1938, a pilot by the name of Cliff Secord and his partner discover a jet-rocket pack that is sought after by a gang of evil Nazis. The leader of the gang, Neville Sinclair, a smooth European movie star, kidnaps Secord's girlfriend and uses her as his bargaining chip. Secord then uses the rocket pack to fight the evil Nazis and rescue his girlfriend. Well, enough said. You'll just have to see the movie for further details.



As of this writing there are currently four different—actually three, since two of the games are the same computer game, by the same company, but for different systems—video games based on the *The Rocketeer* in the works or that have been completed. They are for the Super NES, NES, IBM PC and Amiga systems. Each of which is unique in its presentation of *The Rocketeer*, so let's stop gabbing and take a look at them!

SUPER NES VERSION

Currently under development over at IGS, this version is perhaps the furthest from completion—it's only about 40% done. Programming for the Super NES version of *The Rocketeer* started last September, when the motion picture began production. You're probably wondering how they could have started programming the Super NES version back then, when the console won't even be released in the U.S. until September of '91. Remember that the Super NES is *essentially* the same machine as the Super Famicom, and that system has been available to the Japanese public since November of 1990.

By the time the game is completed, approximately three man years of design and programming will have gone into the project, with a minimum code size of about eight megabits. Graphics include a variety of eye-pleasing digitized photos of characters and backgrounds.

The game itself is broken up into several different scenes with multiple levels. In the first scenario, the gamer, as Cliff Secord, pilots a pre-WW II plane in a national air race. Gamers must race against other competitors in order to receive the best lap time to advance to the next stage. The second stage of this scene features Secord using the jet pack instead of the airplane and racing against the other contestants at the air race.

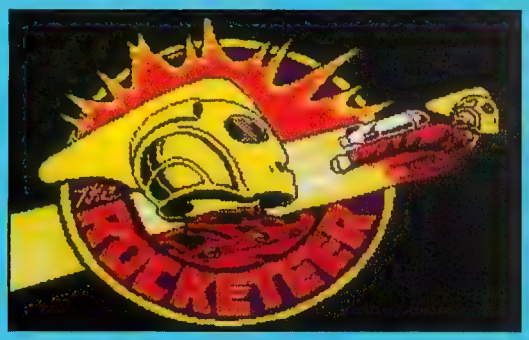
The second phase is an *Operation Wolf*-type setting located at the hangar on the airfield. Using jet packs, gamers must shoot at Neville Sinclair's gang of

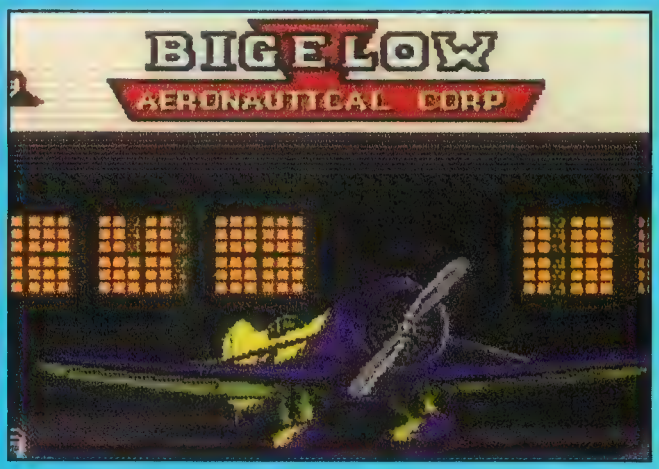
About eight megabits in size, IGS' Super NES version of *The Rocketeer* is currently scheduled for release in January of 1992.

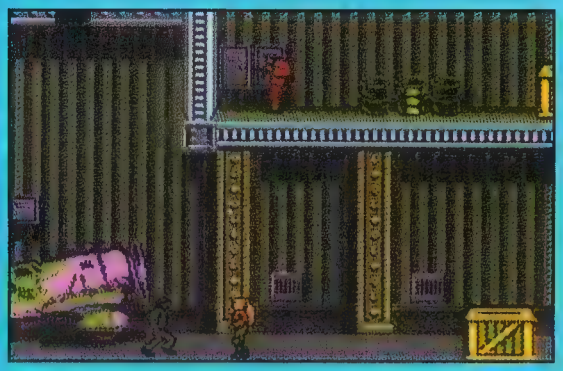
SS THE VIDEO-GAMING UNIVERSE

EER PREVIEW

BY MIKE DAVILA







Gamers must traverse up to six different levels or "chapters" in Bandai's NES version of *The Rocketeer*.

thugs that are both on the ground and in the air. After you've defeated all the enemies, the end boss (called the Armored Flying Tank) appears. Defeating the AFT advances you to the next phase.

The next scenario is a typical NES-style side-scroller, in which the gamer rockets around on the screen, shooting and avoiding an onslaught of parachute bombs, buzz bombs and flying enemies. Meters at the bottom left- and right-hand side of the screen indicate how much life force the gamer has left and how far he or she has progressed along the stage. Once the player nears the end of the level, the gamer must confront the end boss, which is a zeppelin called the Locus.

The final scenario is a vertically scrolling fight scene that takes place aboard a dirigible. The player must punch and kick his way through enemies, rescue his girlfriend Jenny and escape the airship via the Autogiro (a helicopter-type vehicle).

As I mentioned before, the game is less than half completed. Many stages or levels described will more than likely change in format or in game play. The game is currently scheduled for release in January of 1992. Suggested retail price is expected to be in the $65 range.

NES VERSION

Developed by Bandai, this version is currently available to gamers. The game begins with a cinematic-style sequence that informs the player of the story line. Gamers can bypass this sequence by pressing the **START** button. There are a total of six different levels—or as the manual puts it, chapters—that the gamer must complete. After the gamer completes each chapter, a dialogue box appears with more information as the story unfolds.

Game play is presented in a horizontal side-scrolling perspective. The player traverses each of the levels from left to right either by walking, running or flying around with his jet pack. At the top-left corner of the screen is a status bar that indicates the number of bullets, the current weapon selected, fuel meter and the amount of strength left. Gamers have a choice of six different weapons: fist, pistol, rifle, spray gun, hand grenade or bazooka. Each weapon uses a different amount of bullet requirements; some use more than others.

There are a whole allotment of enemies that Cliff Secord will encounter along the way. Some of these enemies will shoot at you and throw grenades at you, while others will just charge at you.

Currently available to gamers, Bandai's NES version employs cinematic-style sequences to inform the gamer of the progressive story line.

The player will also encounter five different types of prizes (red hearts, purple hearts, bullets, silver bullets and gas cans) as he or she makes his or her way through each chapter. Red hearts will restore one unit of strength, while purple hearts will restore all the player's strength. Bullets will increase your inventory by 10, while silver bullets increase your inventory by 20. Gas cans will give you four units of jet pack fuel.

At the end of certain (not all) stages, the gamer will encounter and must defeat the enemy boss (The Gyrocopter, Lothar, Observatory Dome and Neville Sinclair) before advancing to the next stage.

Overall, Bandai's NES version of *The Rocketeer* proved to be an enjoyable game and worthy of anyone's NES library. Suggested retail price will be between $39.95 and $49.95

COMPUTER VERSIONS

Disney might have licensed the NES version of *The Rocketeer* to Bandai and the Super NES version to IGS, but Disney has decided to forge ahead on its own and release the computer version under its Walt Disney Computer Software label.

Disney Software has, for the most part, served the preschooler computer-gaming community, with software titles that focused on or revolved around the popular Disney characters. Most of these games were designed to teach children how to read, spell or paint or present some other learning experience to the child.

Recently the company has tried to break away from the "kiddy genre" by announcing new titles that have a broader appeal for a much larger audience. One of the new titles, *Arachnophobia*, based on the popular movie, shows that the company seems to be headed in the right direction within the computer-entertainment field. Disney Software has gone so far as to release a full-featured animation and paint program that will be available this summer for IBM PC compatible machines—wow, talk about doing a complete 180-degree reversal.

Intended as an action/strategy game, the computer version of *The Rocketeer* will be available for both the IBM PC compatible machines and the Commodore Amiga. Disney's computer version offers gamers a combination of comic book-style graphics with digitized sequences of videotaped characters from the movie and real sets and props from the motion picture. The IBM PC compatible version of the game utilizes 256-color VGA digitized visuals and will support the Roland MT-32, IBM PS/1 DAC, Tandy, Ad Lib, The Sound Blaster and The Sound Source sound boards.

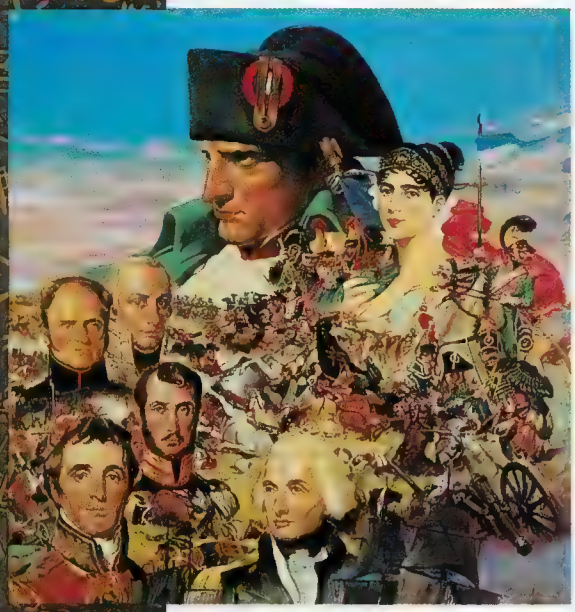
Gamers get to fly around in vintage WW II-era aircraft, pit their brawn and wits against the likes of Nazi henchmen and, last but not least (it wouldn't be *The Rocketeer* without it), fly the experimental Cirrus X-3 rocket pack.

Disney Software will be releasing computer versions of *The Rocketeer* for both the Commodore Amiga and the IBM PC.

Scheduled to hit the shelves sometime this fall, the IBM PC and Amiga version of *The Rocketeer* will retail for $49.95. Disney will make a combo pack available to IBM PC users that contains both the game and The Sound Source sound board for about $69.95, not bad, considering The Sound Source alone is $39.95.

It looks like if you're in the market for getting a hold of a copy of *The Rocketeer* for your system, you won't have to look hard to find it!

EXPLORE THE PAGES OF HISTORY



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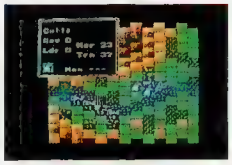
New for PC Version *: Ad-Lib Sound Board Support, Mouse Support*

NES Version*: 3 megabit cartridge, MMC-5 microchip 128K RAM, Battery back-up*

(Release Dates: 9/91 PC/Comp., 11/91 NES)

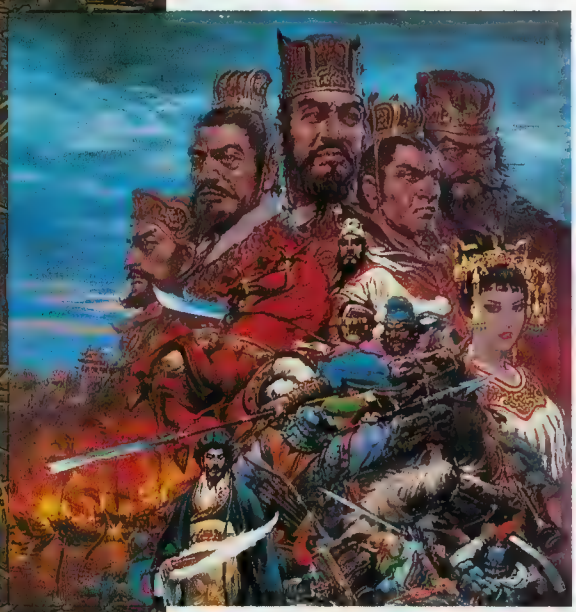
NES screen shot shown



Use artillery and cavalry forces to crush your foes

PC screen shot shown

Extend your influence throughout Europe



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New for PC Version: *Ad-Lib Sound Board Support*

NES Version*: 4 megabit cartridge, MMC-5 microchip 256K RAM, Battery back-up*

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NES screen shot shown

New pull-down menus

PC screen shot shown

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Gilligan's Island

BY BALLY/MIDWAY

BY DONN NAUERT

It seems the world's favorite set of castaways are once again in trouble. This time from the island god Kona, who seems to be very upset and is sending lava racing through the island. Luckily, the professor has come up with a secret lava seltzer that's guaranteed to soothe Kona's upset stomach. And that's where you come in.

You must help Gilligan gather the seven ingredients needed and pour the lava seltzer fast enough so that it doesn't evaporate. If you succeed, you'll get a cool 50-million point bonus. But first you have to help collect the ingredients. There are pineapple (left) and coconut (right) bank targets to hit, and sending the ball through the loops on the left and right three times will take care of the required sea turtle eggs and rope. A target in the lower left will give you another of the ingredients, a shrunken head. To get the bananas you'll have to hit the target that guards the entrance to the ramp. Take a stroll down by the lagoon to collect some sea shells.

That's the easy part. Now you'll have to send the ball into the lava-seltzer-brewing laboratory to mix everything just right. Once the concoction is thoroughly stirred, you'll have to run through the jungle (by knocking the ball up a ramp) to pour it into Kona. But appeasing Kona isn't the only way to score big points. Once you've hit all the targets to spell out "LAGOON," when you send the ball through the blue waters you can score three-million points, get multiball, an extra ball and on more generous days all players can get a million-point bonus tacked on to their score. Also, there's the jungle run skill shot. By sending the ball up the ramp, it'll enter a rotating playfield that will eventually send the ball back down in one of four different directions while points are progressively added to the bonus for when you make the big shot. *Gilligan's Island* also features a dot matrix display that not only shows your score but gives you a visual playback of all your shots and the basic story as you accomplish each segment.

Based on the popular television show, *Gilligan's Island* pits the pinball enthusiast in a race to help Gilligan collect the seven ingredients needed to save the island from destruction.

One thing that adds to the fun of playing *Gilligan's Island* is that mental images are created as you play. With a little imagination you can actually see Gilligan running wildly through the jungle like he did hundreds of times in the television show. But not only can you see all the antics, you can also hear them. Dialogue that sounds as if it might be lines from the show include Thurston Howell III talking Gilligan into being his caddy and later proclaiming, "You've taken my caddy from me!" when you miscue, or the Skipper yelling at his "little buddy" after mishaps.

In the last six months or so, some very high-quality pinballs have been manufactured. I think most will agree that you could add *Gilligan's Island* to that ever-growing list.

As the Prince of Thieves you'll:

- Explore the treacherous Sherwood Forest when you travel back in time to strange and eerie Medieval Britain.
- Engage in arcade-style combat, duelling and chase scenes on horseback in four distinct action levels.
- Battle evil rivals like the Sheriff of Nottingham and his men to increase your strength levels.
- Interact with a variety of mysterious characters - some will even join your party.
- Lead your men through one dangerous mission after another as you search for valuable objects.
- Manipulate objects with new easier interface.

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Road Riot 4wd

BY ATARI

Road Riot 4wd, Atari's latest racing game, pits you against either another player or the computer in an off-road driving competition. The object of the game is fairly simple: Be the first one to cross the finish line in each race. Okay, that sounds simple enough so far. Now add stun guns to slow down the other competitors (or have them slow you down), a touch of adverse terrain and mean competitors, and suddenly things start to get a little complicated.

There are 11 selectable tracks that not only have different terrain and obstacles, but also sport a personal host. Tracks and their hosts include Sheik Ah Legg in the sand dunes of Saudi Arabia, Idi A Mean Dada in Africa and Elvis Vegas in the glitz and glamour of Las Vegas. Drive through the corn fields as you go against Lucas Sinus in Iowa. Avoid the elephants and rhinos in Africa. Or dodge taxis as you try to beat Nasty Nelson in Akron, Ohio. But then again, do you want to avoid the taxis? The crash scenes and the explosions that go with them are great. Besides, you get an added bonus called "hazard pay" at the end of the entire tournament.

Which brings us to the stun guns. While you're going for the taxis, tow trucks and buses, your competition will be passing you by. To slow them down, you have a stun gun that can be fired by pressing the triggers in

Atari's *Road Riot 4wd* is an off-road driving competition in which the player can choose from a variety of 11 tracks, each with different terrain, obstacles and hosts.

the steering wheel, which is similar to *Road Blasters* or *Hydra*. Likewise, they'll try to slow you down the same way—you can feel it in the seat through the special "rump thump" that taps the bottom of your seat every time you are shot. The steering wheel also has a shaker built into it, so that when you get off the main road, the wheel will vibrate.

At the end of each course you'll be awarded a trophy for first through third place and a big sucker for last. If you come in first, you'll be treated to a shot at the winner's circle with the other cars and the crowd behind you. Also, two babes (each course has different ones) will be hanging all over you. Of course, the girls only have bikinis on, except in the colder climates, where they'll have parkas on as well. Winning allows you to go to the next race automatically, but if you don't finish in first, then you better have another quarter ready, because it's going to cost you!

After finishing the entire tournament, race winnings (monies won for the place you finished in), hazard pay and a series completion will be added to your regular score. The total will then be your final score for the tournament.

Graphically *Road Riot* is a cross between *Road Blasters* and *Pit Fighter*. The game contains digitized graphics of real-life images of crowd scenes, ambulances and animals. The game also has a great digitized voice that will warn you of impending dangers, praise you for getting out of a tough jam and do its best *George of the Jungle* impersonation as he tells you to "Watch out for that tree!" However, that comes only after you have plowed into it. When you ram into a rock, you'll hear a happy, "Red car finds a rock" come out of the speakers. There are some excellent sound effects as well. When you run into a sign post or trash can, it sounds as if you really did. There are also some "fun" things you can do during the race, especially when you're out of it. Gamers can run into the cows to make them moo, or maybe watch the crowd go flying as you try to run them down.

Although the control of the car is a little looser than what I'd normally like, it seems that it's easier to get out of spins, or other bad situations, than some of the other games with similar controls. When you do crash, your car doesn't take what seems like an eternity to get back onto the road. And throughout most of the game the animation is great, with the exception of the digitized actors, who look like someone is pressing the forward/rewind button over and over again. With each game release, I find that something is improving. Overall, I found *Road Riot* to be a fun game to play, especially when I went up against a friend.

Graphically, *Road Riot 4wd* is a cross between *Road Blasters* and *Pit Fighter*. The game contains digitized graphics of real-life images of crowd scenes, ambulances and animals.

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Can you hack it? As the imprisoned young adventurer who has just managed to escape your cell in the palace dungeons, you have only 60 minutes to make your way to the top of the palace and rescue the beautiful princess from a forced marriage with Jaffar the evil tyrant who has stolen her father's throne.

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CIRCLE #124 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

THE 1991 GAMERS' POLL:

PART 1: GAMERS GET READY TO BUY

BY ARNIE KATZ AND THE VG&CE EDITORIAL STAFF

Electronic gaming stands at a crossroads. Computer entertainment and coin-ops are both seeking new directions where they can resurge. Meanwhile, the video-game market is in upheaval as new technology does its best to capture the public's fancy.

This uncertainty and apprehension makes the 1991 VG&CE Survey of Electronic Gaming unusually interesting. More gamers than ever before filled out and returned ballots, making this gaming's largest-ever sampling of opinion.

The gaming nation has spoken. What they had to say about their favorite hobby will provide the industry and the loyal fans plenty to think about in the next few months.

WHAT THEY PLAY

The Nintendo Entertainment System (NES) is still the most popular game console. More than 64% own an NES, and roughly a third of the total sample connect a Sega Master System (SMS) to their gaming screen. Approximately 13.6% have an Atari 7800, so it is safe to say that quite a few players possess more than one eight-bit machine at the present time.

Megagamers (see sidebar) have an even higher level of 8-bit ownership. Slightly more than two-thirds have an NES, 32.1% own an SMS and 15.4% have a 7800 in their gaming arsenal. Video-game specialists are a little less likely to own a 7800 (13.2%), but are more apt to possess an NES (67.2%) or an SMS (32.7%) than the other two types of players.

It looks like just about every gamer owns an 8-bit console, but that doesn't mean they're going to stick with them now that there's a new generation of 16-bit wonder machines.

The Sega Genesis is already a solid hit with VG&CE readers. Almost half, 49.7%, have one. Video-gaming specialists have really gone for the Genesis in a big way; over 56% are playing on them.

The megagamers are only slightly less sold on the machine; 47.7% have already made the purchase. This is a slight reversal from last year's survey, when Genesis ownership among megagamers was higher than the average for all respondents. The difference is within the margin of error for the survey, so it probably doesn't represent a meaningful trend.

The TurboGrafx-16 can be found in 29.6% of gaming homes, a big rise over the 19% of 1990. The TG-16 rates highest among megagamers (32.1%), but video gamers aren't far behind at 31%.

The Neo•Geo was just rolling into retail stores at the time of the survey, so the 3.9% penetration is no cause for alarm at SNK. Many have jeered at the idea that people will pay $999 for a console and over $200 for each cartridge, but it's clear that some electronic gamers will go the limit for a system that delivers unstinting arcade quality. How many, on the other hand, is something we'll know better after the 1992 survey next spring. Similarly, the Super NES was not yet available in this country, so there was no ownership to measure.

Last year, Nintendo's Game Boy held a better than two-to-one lead over the Lynx in the portable contest. As of June 1991, the monochrome portable had widened its lead over its color rival, 33.4% to 13.8%.

The impact of Atari's price reduction for the Lynx and its effort to produce a lot of new cartridges for the unit should help close the gap in the coming year. There's now a fourth portable, the Sega Game Gear, but it was not released in time to be considered in the 1991 poll.

WHAT GAMERS WILL PURCHASE

With the all-important fourth quarter under way, every company in the industry is anxiously monitoring sales figures to see which systems will capture gamers' hearts and which will become expensive landfill. There's plenty of time for consumers to change their minds, but the buying intentions they expressed to VG&CE through their survey ballots give an early indication of the year's winners and losers.

The impending introduction in the U.S. of the Nintendo Super NES is certainly the biggest event of the 1992 electronic-gaming year. The 16-bit console, which comes packaged with *Super Mario World*, is already a smash in Japan, but can it find the same success on *this* side of the Pacific?

READERS PICK THEIR FAVORITE VIDEO GAMES

Phantasy Star II, Sega's exciting adventure game, has clearly stood the "test of time." Second in the rankings last year, it took the honors this time despite a stiff challenge from Nintendo's blockbuster *Super Mario Brothers 3*. By contrast, the passage of time has not been kind to *Golden Axe*, which failed to crack the lists after topping them in 1990.

Here are the "Top 10" for both groups, plus the all-important combined rankings (listed in order of total points):

VIDEO GAMERS RATE THE VIDEO GAMES

(First-place votes in parenthesis)
Phantasy Star II (30)
Super Mario Bros. 3 (25)
Strider (15)
Sword of Vermilion (10)
Final Fantasy (10)
Mega Man 3 (10)
Splatterhouse (15)
John Madden Football (5)
Mickey Mouse in the Castle of Illusion (5)
Revenge of Shinobi (5)

MEGAGAMERS RATE THE TOP VIDEO GAMES

(First-place votes in parenthesis)
Super Mario Bros. 3 (30)
Phantasy Star II (30)
Final Fantasy (30)
Bonk's Adventure (25)
Strider (10)
Sword of Vermilion (22)
MegaMan 3 (10)
Mickey Mouse in the Castle of Illusion (10)
Ghouls & Ghosts (10)
John Madden Football (10)
Bart Simpson Vs. the Space Mutants (10)

VG&CE READERS PICK THE VIDEO-GAME TOP TEN

Phantasy Star II
Super Mario Bros. 3
Final Fantasy
Strider
Sword of Vermilion
MegaMan 3
Bonk's Adventure
Mickey Mouse in the Castle of Illusion
John Madden Football
Ninja Spirit

The answer, according to the 1991 survey, is "Yes!" Over 48% of the sample plan to buy a Super NES before the end of this year. That should translate into a complete sellout for the 2 million consoles Nintendo expects to ship before January 1, 1992. The connoisseurs of the hobby, the megagamers, are even *more* likely (52.1%) to buy, so the immediate future of Nintendo's latest brainchild looks bright.

The Genesis and TurboGrafx-16 will pick up new owners, too, but the Super NES is almost certain to limit their gains. Sega's top-of-the-line fun machine is on the shopping list of 10.7%, while 2.9% expect to acquire a TG-16.

Despite the recession, 12.4% plan to shell out the big dough for the Neo•Geo. How well that astounding figure will hold up through another six months of economic slow growth could produce one of 1991's most intriguing stories. If it does, one out of every six gamers will own a Neo•Geo by year's end, which would make it a major force in the cartridge universe.

Assuming that survey participants carry through, the Lynx will finally gain some ground on the Game Boy. Nearly three times as many gamers expect to buy a Lynx (15.4%), while only 5.4% see a new Game Boy in their future. That still leaves the Game Boy with a healthy lead, but far from its current two-to-one superiority.

Coming Attractions

The 1991 Survey of Electronic Gaming produced a wealth of information, far too much to present in a single installment. Part II, in the next issue of VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT, will focus on the most popular themes for computer and video games as well as the attitudes, desires and preferences of home-computer gamers.

Meet America's Electronic Gamers

This year, as in the past, the VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT Survey of Electronic Gaming asked a number of questions aimed at finding out who's playing computer and video games. The second annual study confirms the conclusions of the first: our magazine is a rallying point for the most enthusiastic and knowledgeable electronic gamers in the U.S.A.

VG&CE readers own lots of equipment, and they're not shy about buying more. Video gamers still constitute the largest segment, but the so-called megagamers (people who enjoy all forms of electronic gaming) account for nearly 39% of the sampling.

According to VG&CE's 1991 Survey of Electronic Gaming, the typical gamer is most likely to be male and a junior or senior high school student. Over 42% fall into the 12-16 age bracket. Still, gaming isn't only for young teenagers. About a fourth are college age (17-25), and an equal number are over 26 years of age.

Average spending is up slightly over last year, but the difference works out to pocket change—30¢ per week. More gamers are spending close to the $7.35-per-week mean on electronic gaming. Fewer gamers earmark over $10 a week more for their hobby than formerly, but again, 37% fit this description, which is only 1% less than in last year's poll.

A few newspaper stories have intimated that Americans have lost their fascination with electronic gaming. The survey statistics refute this. Nearly 73% play six or more hours a week, a 6% jump over last year. A few may have cut back a little on their gaming time, but the ranks of heavy players (120 or more hours a week) increased from 1990's 30% to 44% this year!

Gaming to the Power of Three

The 1990 survey asked questions that enabled us to separate the VG&CE audience into three distinct gamer subtypes: video gamers, computer gamers and megagamers. The first group plays primarily cartridge games, the second is involved mostly with software, while the third subtype is equally fluent with all types of interactive electronic-entertainment.

Not surprisingly, these distinctions held true in the latest study too. Let's look at some of the similarities and differences.

The largest group of gamers, 51%, consists of video gamers. Cartridge companies have made a lot of noise about broadening the demographics for cartridge contests, and the study indicates that they are starting to have some success. Last year, 52% were in the 12-16 age category, and another 6% were under 12 years of age. This time, only 48% were high school age or younger. More than 31% are over 26, versus 25% last time, and there's also been a big increase in the 17-25 age group. Nearly half (47.1%) play more than 10 hours a week. Only about 2% are occasional video gamers, logging two hours or less per week.

We asked video gamers to rate their level of interest in various types of electronic games on a scale of 1-10. As expected, these players are phenomenally interested in video carts (9.8), moderately enthusiastic about coin-ops (7.0) and significantly less excited about entertainment software (5.9).

Those who like computer games and nothing but are just a sliver of the audience (5.4%). No segment has a higher percentage of women (27%) or the over-40 group (36.4%). Someone in this category generally is over 26 years old and earns $40,000-$60,000 annually. Computer gaming specialists may not be numerous, but they sure are committed to the hobby! Over 53% spend at least 500 hours a year with entertainment disks, several hours a week more than the video gamers. The most likely reason is that today's most popular computer-game genres, adventures, RPGs and simulations, take longer to play.

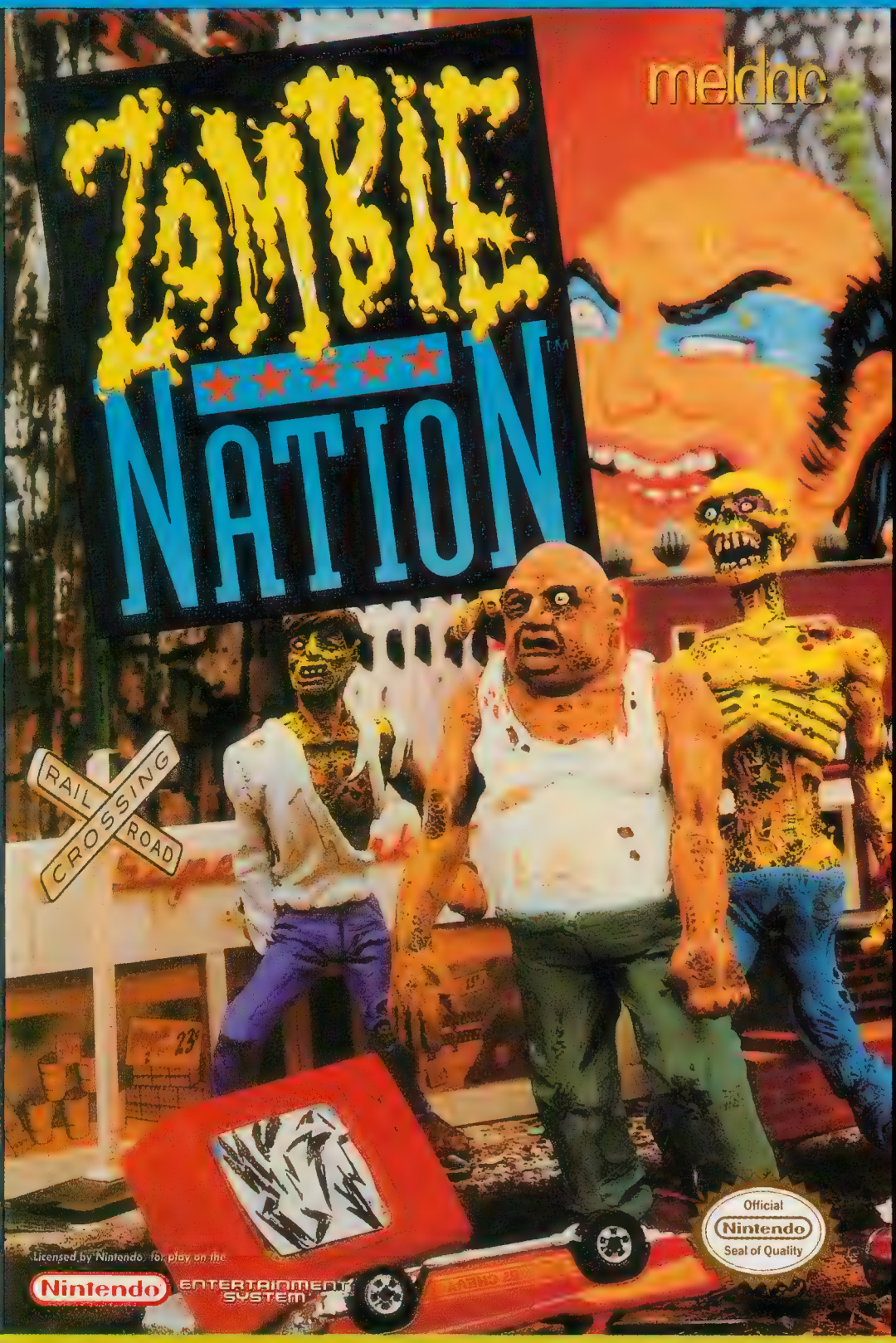
Everyone has heard about the sales slump that has afflicted computer software for the last year. The reason may be that computer gamers are a bit jaded with the 1991 crop of new releases. They're a lot less interested in computer games this year (8.2 out of 10) than in 1990 (9.3) and display generally less interest in the hobby now than 12 months ago. Computerists rate video games at just 4.6 out of 10, and coin-ops drew an anemic 3.5, both substantially below last year's interest levels.

Where did those enthusiastic computer gamers go? Most of them have joined the ranks of the megagamers, now 44.6% of the total.

The megagamers are the wave of the future. They're much younger than either of the specialist groups, with only 13% having celebrated their 26th birthday. The reasonable interpretation is that older gamers are a bit more set in their ways and that the most enthusiastic younger ones have learned that the medium is a lot less important than the message. They don't care what kind of equipment presents the games, as long as it's a high quality play-experience.

Megagamers are the hobby's hard-core. They rate video games almost as high as those who play nothing else (9.3 out of 10), yet they also love computer games more (8.6) than those who play only on computers. To top it off, they give coin-ops a higher rating (7.1) than any other segment of the gaming community. In other words, the megagamers flat out love electronic games of every type and description.

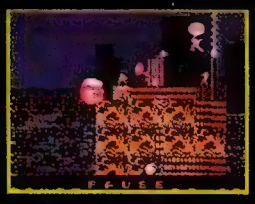
THE ZOMBIES ARE COMING!!!!



By I. C. GOOLS, Times Staff Writer

NEW YORK--What appeared to be a harmless meteorite crashing in the Nevada desert has turned out to be Darc Seed, an evil alien creature with horrible powers. By shooting strange rays, Darc Seed has turned the helpless nation into zombie slaves.

Mayor Heminhaw immediately called an emergency press conference where he read the following prepared statement. "I um, er,ah, I am doing everything, ah, er, humanly possible to see to it that ah, this situation er, um, this terrible situation ah, comes to a ah, ahem, a swift and , er, um, um, a swift and um, satisfactory close.



Ground Shaking NES Action

Zombie Nation is a ground shaking action/shooting game for the NES. The object of the game is to wreak total destruction on everything you see (it's a dark and dirty job, but somebody's got to do it). Meanwhile, you need to rescue as many zombie hostages as you can in order to gain enough strength for the ultimate showdown with Darc Seed (he's toast!).

Devastating Graphics and Pounding Sound

Zombie Nation's graphics are so devastatingly realistic you'll almost be tempted not to demolish them (yeah right!). And the relentlessly pounding sound effects will make you feel like you're right in the middle of the action hammering away at skyscrapers, mountains, and everything else that crosses your path. So don't just stand there like a Zombie, get your copy now!

Distributed by Meldac of America, Inc. 1801 Century Park East Suite 2210, Los Angeles, CA. 90067 (213) 286-7040

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ZOMBIE ★ NATION

CIRCLE #125 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

WINNING THE DESERT WAR

BY JOYCE WORLEY

War Games Salute Desert Storm

President Bush called on Americans to make this 4th of July special in honor of the returning Desert Storm troops. Red, white and blue banners waved in the wind as Americans enjoyed a healthy serving of patriotic pride. The strategists will be talking about the war in the Gulf for years, how it was and how it might have been, as they study "what if" scenarios.

The Pentagon, Annapolis and West Point aren't the only settings for these strategic simulations. War games set on the sand are the hottest military contests of the year, both as computerized board games and electronic-action entertainments. The programs elaborate on current events to let computer gamers relive history in great detail or conduct their own campaigns. The next 12 months will see completion of simulations exactly keyed to the Desert Storm war, but meanwhile there is plenty of fun to be had from combat games with missions in the Middle East.

A Commanding Point of View

A good introduction to the world's most troubled area can be gained through a pair of games that take a wider view of the Middle East. One that's not yet available takes a close look at the Arab/Israeli conflicts. In the other, the Soviet Union squares off against Iran, as the US joins its allies in defense.

Gulf Strike, by Avalon Hill, offers a different political view of the Middle East theater with a simulated Soviet invasion of Iran.

Scheduled for release this summer, *Conflict in the Middle East: Arab/Israeli Wars* (Strategic Simulations, Inc.) is an operational war game that simulates combat in 1973 or the present. The player, as the overall military commander of either Israel or the Arab Coalition, must (respectively) take control of Tel Aviv or Damascus and Cairo in order to win. The detailed brigade/divisional level game puts the armchair general in command of each squad, vehicle and gun tube, through two scenarios and six difficult levels.

Gulf Strike (Avalon Hill) is slightly older, with a different political view of the Middle East theater. It simulates a Soviet invasion of Iran, equipped with tanks, mechanized units, infantries and naval and air support, facing off against the Allied (American, French and British) expeditionary forces. This is a computerization of a famous board game; it gives the player a lot of leeway in conducting campaigns against several individual nations in the area.

Action on the Ground

Modern ground warfare in the Middle East means tanks, lots of them. It would take an entire article to itemize the history of on-screen tank warfare; this has been a popular form of gaming since the invention of the video game. Many of the simulations completed in the past few years have desert scenarios.

One of the best of the desert tank games isn't set in the Persian Gulf. *Rommel: Battles for North Africa* (Strategic Studies Group) is an excellent primer in the tactics and history of desert fighting. No gamer who wants to understand tank warfare should pass this by. The brilliance of the commanders shines forth in this simulation of the era that matched the Desert Fox against General Patton and General Montgomery.

Three-Sixty Software also replicated this sandy history of WWII in their *Sands of Fire*. The player fights as either a British or American commander in any of 48 actual battles in the North African desert. This one is a real study of historical accuracy with a lot of action, duplicating confrontations between the British, American and German forces.

There are several modern tank games that provide high action without being specific to any particular theater of operations. *Battletank* (Absolute Entertainment) for play on Nintendo, was written by veteran game-creator Garry Kitchen. It presents a first-person view through the eyes of a tank commander on ten missions into enemy territory. Though not specifically located in the Middle East theater, the heavily armed tank delivers a lot of action in this combat game.

Ocean's *Battle Command*, for play on Amiga, Atari ST and IBM PC machines, is scheduled for its American debut later this year. Advance information on the game is sketchy, but it uses polygon-fill graphics to create landscapes and features multiple views from inside or outside the tank. An on-screen aiming cursor should keep things lively.

Tom Loughry's *Steel Thunder* (Accolade) is a highly realistic simulation with several possible missions and a choice of tanks: the M1A1 Abrams, M60A3, M48A5 Patton and the hybrid M3 Bradley Fighting Vehicle. The tanker's main assignment is German border defense, but *Steel Thunder* offers over 20 different missions, some of which are in Syria.

Steel Thunder breaks control into three stations that may be assumed by the gamer at any time: driver, gunner and commander. Gauges, lights, switches, toggles and other controls and status indicators take up two-thirds of each screen, and the final third is allotted to a trio of periscope windows through which the battlefield is viewed.

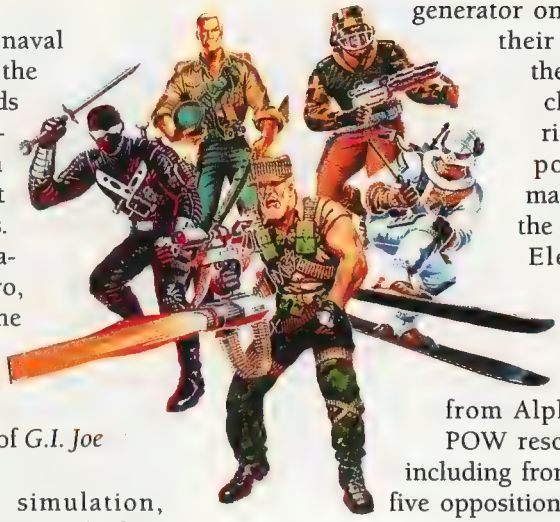
Ocean's *Battle Command* (top) is scheduled for U.S. release later this year. Accolade's *Steel Thunder* (bottom) offers over 20 different missions to choose from.

Hand-to-Hand

Once air assault softens the way, the naval bombardment pounds the opposition and the tanks start to roll, successful warfare depends on the American hero—the foot soldier. Action-combat games are always popular with video gamers, and several of the newest shoot-'em-ups feature desert warfare scenarios.

G.I. Joe (Taxan, for play on Nintendo) features several quests for the American hero, some of which are in the Middle East. The game features six levels of action, with multiple endings. It's a search-and-destroy shoot-a-thon for combatants. It's not terribly realistic, but the great graphics of *G.I. Joe* are interesting.

Interstel's man-to-man combat simulation, *D.R.A.G.O.N. Force,* puts the player in command of an anti-terrorist strike force. This strategy game provides a pool of 14 soldiers with individual specialties and attributes. The player picks seven for each mission, arms them for action, then uses command menus to order each unit. There are 12 missions, accessed through tactical overhead maps and strategic views of battlefields, ranging from hostage rescues to search-and-destroy missions. The on-screen combatants receive promotions as well as attribute increases after each successful mission.



Taxan's *G.I. Joe* for the NES is based on the popular character by Hasbro.

Just Above the Sand

Helicopters take the pilot closer to the battle than ever before. There are fewer whirlybird than airplane simulations on the market, but, fortunately, the new entries in this category are very fine. Some of the finest fly missions into the desert.

Gunship 2000 (MicroProse) is a multi-copter simulator. Gamers can choose from seven types of copters and take up to five on each mission. Gamers can opt for training, fly single and multiple chopper missions or play the campaign game. The action occurs in central Europe and the Persian Gulf. There's even a mission generator on board, so gamers can create their own missions and then save them to disk. Multiple views, including one that lets the player ride the missile, and a new topographical graphics system make it even more realistic than the first *Gunship.*

Top: EA's *LHX Attack Chopper* simulates four combat choppers. Bottom: In *Gunship 2000* gamers can create their own missions.

Electronic Arts' *LHX Attack Chopper,* simulates four combat choppers (the LHX, OSprey, Apache and Black Hawk) in missions ranging from Alpha Strike, Interceptions and POW rescues. Thirteen exterior views, including from the nose of the missile, and five opposition-skill levels provide lively action in three hot spots—Vietnam, East Germany and Libya.

Armor Alley (Three-Sixty Software) isn't set anywhere in particular, but it's a hot action game involving troop movement through enemy firepower. The gamer mans a helicopter, flying above a column of trucks and transports; the mission is to get the supplies through and destroy the foe's headquarters. Up to four players can compete, and it's also modem-compatible for two players. Small graphics are set against an inky black, barren landscape—it's easy to imagine this is desert conflict.

Even on the Sea

It may seem strange to think of naval support in a desert war, but in fact, military welfare in the Persian Gulf situation is closely linked to the fleet.

The remarkable naval simulation *Harpoon* (Three-Sixty Software) contains military information on every sub, ship and combat aircraft in use. The latest auxiliary disk, *Harpoon Battleset 3, The Med Conflict,* focuses on Mediterranean and Near Eastern countries: Arabia, Israel, Turkey, Greece, Libya, Syria, Iraq, Italy and Egypt. The add-on disk provides what-if confrontations that let the gamer compare the strengths and weaknesses of each country.

Cosmi's *Navcom 6* focuses America's Sixth Fleet in the Persian Gulf. The compu-captain uses an impressive set of animated maps, radar scopes and video transmissions, along with damage controls and communications. This slightly older title may be hard to find. It was first marketed to simulate encounters with Iran's troops.

Three-Sixty's latest *Harpoon* auxiliary disk focuses on conflicts in the Mediterranean Sea.

Strike Fleet (Electronic Arts) has 12 missions, some of

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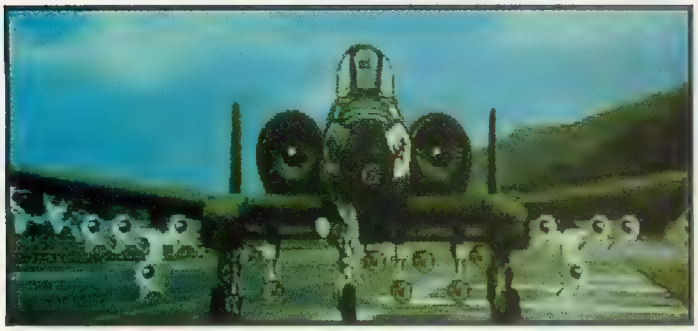
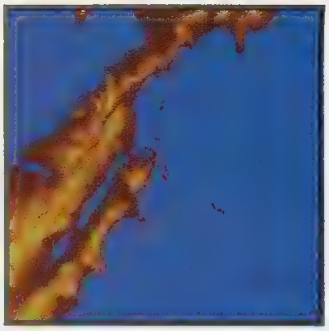
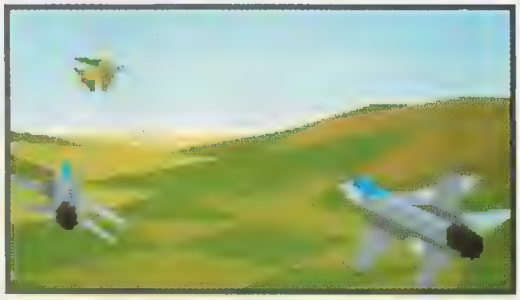




which take place in the Persian Gulf. The player takes the role of admiral and commands any ship in the fleet, using joystick control to launch missiles. The opposition ranges from patrols and submarines to battleships.



Top left: *A-10 Tank Killer Enhanced*, by Dynamix.
Top right: Three-Sixty's *Megafortress*.
Above: *Falcon 3.0*, by Spectrum HoloByte.

But Mostly in the Air

By far, there are more Middle East scenarios found in flight games than in any other types of battle. Virtually every modern-aircraft simulator contains missions into that war-torn section of the world. This is true of the most technical, virtual realism simulations and also of the seat-of-your pants-flying fighter games.

A-10 Tank Killer Enhanced (Dynamix/Sierra) is an upgrade of their award-winner, and it's even more realistic than the first program. The old flight model has been replaced by the one Dynamix used in *The Red Baron*, with much improved physics for more realistic plane handling. The graphics were completely redrawn, and now weapon loads can be customized. Dynamix also imported the multiple-view camera technique from *Red Baron* and enhanced the sound effects and music.

An A-10 instrument panel dominates the cockpit, which features a realistic first-person view out the window. During missions, radio provides additional information, calls for assistance, messages from ground troops and a lot of chatter from the wingmen. The new program has 21 combat missions, with seven based in the Persian Gulf.

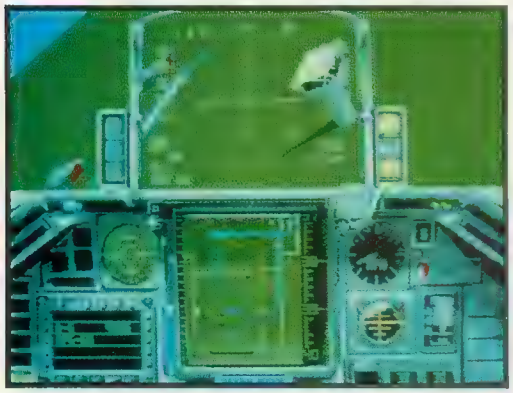
Three-Sixty's *Megafortress*, based on Dale Brown's novel *Flight of the Old Dog*, puts the gamer inside a modified B52H in a 3-D world. Five positions must be manned, including pilot, navigator, electronic warfare and offensive and defensive weapons. The bomber is armed with plenty of firepower to blast its way through the available missions, against Russia, Libya, the Arctic and Iraq.

Spectrum HoloByte's *Falcon 3.0* is an update of this company's F-16 fighter simulation. The latest version presents 3-D contoured terrain based on maps of Kuwait, Panama and Israel. Players control a squad of 16 planes (eight flying simultaneously) or pilot a single plane in an arcade-style shooter. This newest version of the *Falcon* simulation lets two players on different computers dogfight or cooperate via connecting cables or modem.

Owners of the original *Falcon* can heat up the action with *Operation: Firefight, the Falcon Mission Disk II*. It has 12 new missions that fit together into an overall campaign and levels of difficulty ranging from 1st Lieutenant through Colonel.

MicroProse probably sends more flights to the Middle East than Air Israel. *F-15 Strike Eagle*, already a hit on computer and coin-op, flies to the NES this year. The game features training levels as the gamer learns to control the carefully constructed flight simulator through missions in six combat arenas. The fighter executes realistic turns, rolls and loops that give the pilot a real sense of accomplishment. Unfortunately the enemy is also realistic and intelligent and provides great competition.

The company flew back to the Middle East with the new *F-117A Nighthawk Stealth Fighter 2.0*. The new program is based on their earlier hit, *F-19 Stealth Fighter*, and includes a more realistic cockpit and a replay option, plus graphic enhancements such as better landscapes, night graphics and spite explosions. The simulation contains new versions of all the existing worlds from the original and from *F-15 Strike Eagle*, plus three new locations including: Columbia/Panama, northern Japan and Iraq. The improved mission-generation system and heightened enemy artificial intelligence should keep the action lively.



Above: *Operation: Firefight, the Falcon Mission Disk II* offers owners of the original program 12 new scenarios. Right: MicroProse's *F-117A Nighthawk Stealth Fighter 2.0* is based on their original hit, *F-19 Stealth Fighter*.

Dogfighting in Activision's *F-14 Tomcat* keeps the action hot, but the piloting easy for novices. The player is a naval fighter pilot, flying air-to-air combat maneu-

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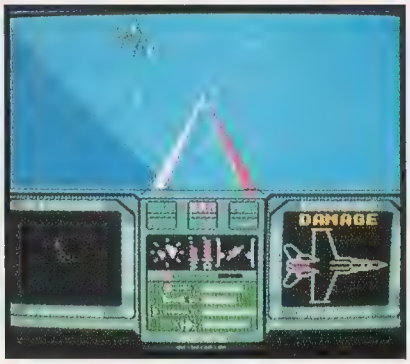
vers in Naval School first and then in missions over Central America, Korea and in the Middle East, Iraq and Libya. A variety of perspectives, including external views, couples with short- and long-range weaponry and a unique radar-scrambler to avert guided missiles. This game was originally created for Commodore 64 then substantially redone for IBM-PC.

Ultimate Air Combat, also from Activision, features air-to-air and air-to-ground combat on the Nintendo, as the user pilots either an F-14 Tomcat, F-18 Hornet or the Harrier. Each aircraft has its own graphic display, as well as flight characteristics and weaponry. There are over 30 missions on disk, including some oil field assaults. Sound effects are great, and there's even digitized speech in the form of copilot instructions.



Top: *F-14 Tomcat*, by Activision.
Left: *F-16 Combat Pilot*, by Electronic Arts.
Right: *Ultimate Air Combat*, also by Activision.

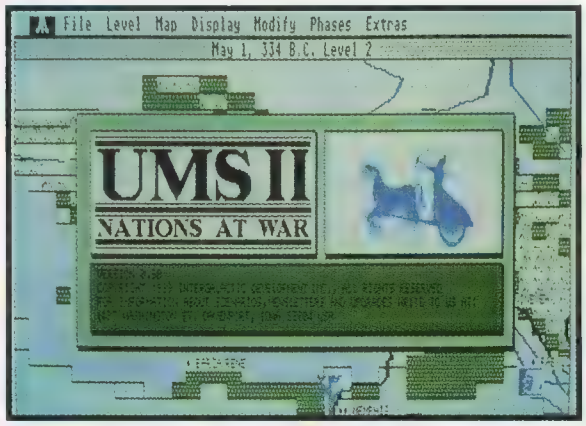
When Activision got its corporate wings, it just wouldn't stop flying. The company's *Death or Glory* simulates 12 of the greatest missions in air history. Each of the 12 planes have realistic flight modeling that replicates over 20 flight characteristics. These include motion, speed, gravity, thrust and drag, and, of course, the external and internal graphics. The missions span six eras, over 76 years of air combat history—WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam, Falkland Islands and Israel versus Syria. In each war theater, the player flies against a famous pilot. The gamer can even sit back and let pilots and planes from different eras battle each other in fantasy dogfights.

The gamer flies five basic missions to become a squad commander in Electronic Arts' *F-16 Combat Pilot,* then progresses through ten squadrons, each more elite than the one before. Missions include anti-tank raids, airfield and radar station strikes and reconnaissance flights over enemy installations.

Do-It-Yourself Warfare

For truly customized warfare, gamers can create their own military on-screen conflicts using specialty software. These "construction kits" provide great latitude for would-be generals, who can tailor the electronic warfare to any era, in any theater of conflict.

Ezra Sidran's *Universal Military Simulator II* (MicroProse) lets players simulate historical or fantasy battles at anytime in the past, present or never was. War campaigns can involve up to 127 nations, 525 provinces and 32,000 military units. Battles are depicted on a 3-D grid with player views from any angle. Overviews show the whole battle or close-ups of individual military units.



Universal Military Simulator II, by MicroProse, lets players simulate historical or fantasy battles.

The gamer controls everything, simulating real battles or modified historicals, fantasy battles (dragons versus Indians, for example) or never-happened contests (such as Napoleon versus Robert E. Lee). It shouldn't be much of a trick to duplicate the Kuwait-Iraqi border with this.

War Game Construction Set (Strategic Simulations, Inc.) provides the raw materials to build games. The user builds terrain by placing roads, rivers, bridges, woods, buildings and mines in any arrangement and scale. The combatants are similarly constructed, much as heroes are put together in role-playing games by assigning attributes such as unit type, weapon type, firepower, movement and strength points. There are built-in scenarios, but Desert Storm simulators will want to create their own.

More Wars to Come

Just as the Persian Gulf cradled civilization, so did it cradle warfare. Troops have thundered across the deserts of the Middle East since before history began, and it's safe to predict that it's not over yet. The latest wars only follow a long legacy of battle.

War games relive, and thereby help us understand, human conflicts, why and how they happened. They provide painless history lessons, as well as exercises in strategic thinking. This group of simulations shares one outstanding element beyond their setting: they are very engrossing. Many an armchair general will get his stars winning these battles on the home video-game screen.

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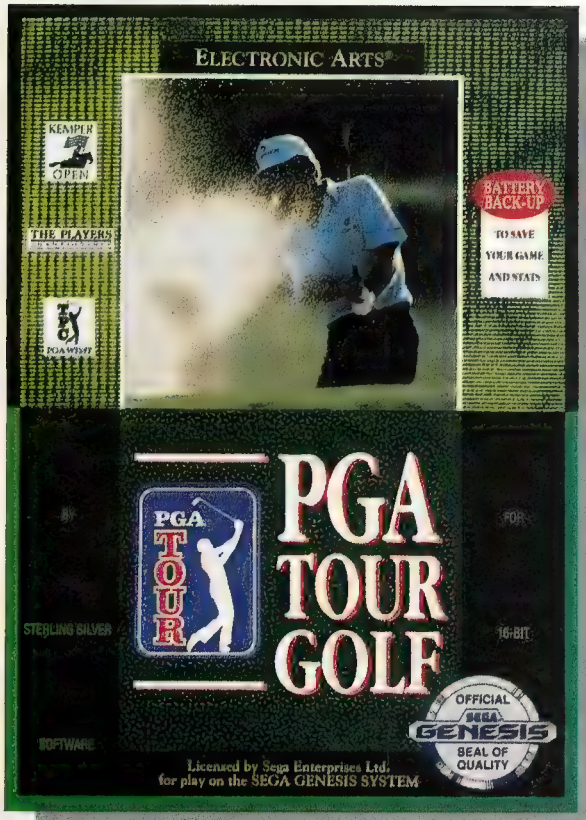

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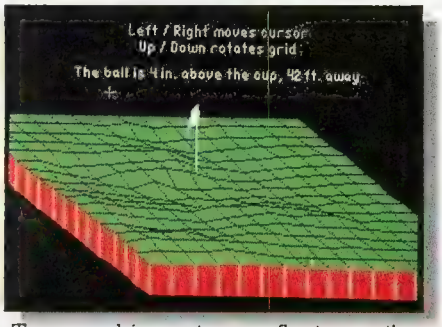

Topographic contours reflect even the smallest green wrinkle. If you misread them, watch out for the bogey man.

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CIRCLE #129 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

Computer Gaming for Kids

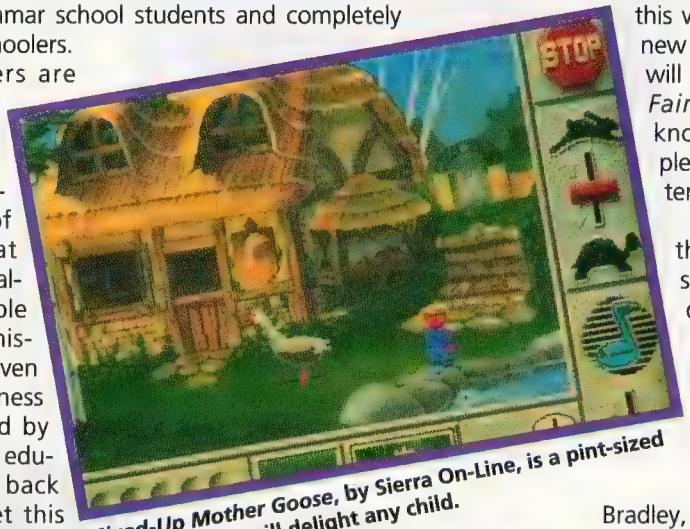
FUNWARE FOR YOUNG PLAYERS

BY JOYCE WORLEY

ILLUSTRATION BY DALE CODY

Computer users are generally eager for their children to become acquainted with computers, and they know that there's nothing like games to make the learning experience a lot easier. Yet entertainments that are perfect for mom and pop, or for their high school-aged offspring, may be incomprehensible to grammar school students and completely unapproachable for preschoolers.

Games for youngsters are available in great plenitude, but most combine some educational functions with the entertainment. There are scads of delightful programs that impart knowledge of the alphabet, numbers or simple arithmetic. Geography, history, ecology, chemistry, even politics, physics and business management are tutored by computer. The history of educational programs goes back only about a decade, yet this area of software design has made magnificent strides. Once novelties, computer-aided educational tools have become solid, widely accepted teaching aids that help instructors in and out of the classrooms.

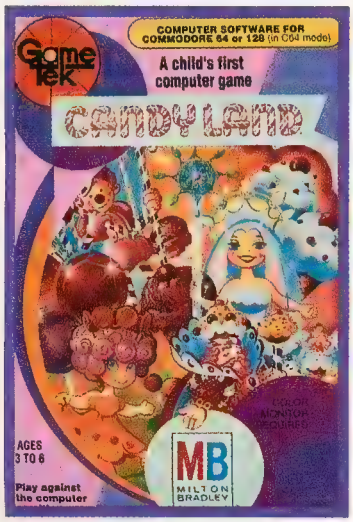


Mixed-Up Mother Goose, by Sierra On-Line, is a pint-sized adventure that will delight any child.

Yet kids deserve better. It's hardly fair that every minute, even those scheduled for recreation, should be spent practicing learning drills. No matter how you disguise the message, adding numbers is still work, reciting alphabets is still study and programs with too heavy of an educational content are hardly relaxing. Once in a while the young computerist should have the opportunity to just have fun.

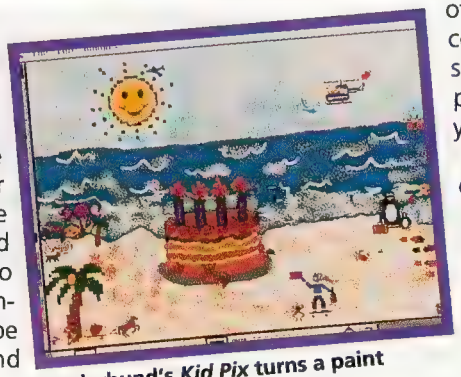
This year there's a nice selection of entertainment software available for youngsters. True, they might learn something while they're playing; using the computer is, in and of itself, an educational experience. But these games are meant to be fun first, and any learning is secondary to the play experience.

No discussion of kid's games would be complete without mentioning *Mixed-Up Mother Goose* (Sierra/Amiga, Apple II, IIGS, Atari ST, IBM PC, Macintosh). Designed by the queen of adventure games, Roberta Williams, the program contains flawless graphics, music and nursery-rhyme recitation, linked together in a pint-sized adventure that will delight any child.



***Candy Land*, by GameTek, is based on Milton Bradley's board game.**

All the nursery rhymes are broken up, with their parts scrambled throughout the land. The child must wander around Mother Goose land, finding and matching pieces to make the rhymes complete. The pail must be returned to Jack and Jill, the lost sheep taken back to Little Bo Peep and Little Miss Muffet must find her tuffet. When each rhyme is made complete, animations, music and recitations reward the child. *Mixed-Up Mother Goose* provides an incredibly satisfying play experience for children, with no reading required.


Brøderbund's *Kid Pix* turns a paint program into a toy box for kids.

Sierra will take a trip into fairy-tale land this winter, when the company introduces a new adventure for juveniles, but this game will also appeal to adult players. *Mixed-Up Fairy Tales* (IBM PC) interweaves well-known stories and parables with a complete soundtrack and a point-and-click interface that requires no reading skills.

The company is pulling no punches on the graphics for *Mixed-Up Fairy Tales*; stories spring to life in 256 colors that draw the user into the imaginary world. This won't be ready until autumn, but it's a guaranteed winner for the younger set.

Candy Land (GameTek/Apple II, Commodore 64, IBM PC), the well-known board game from Milton Bradley, is now available for computer play. Just like the original, it's designed to be a child's first game and requires no reading. The plot is familiar; Candy Land's king has disappeared, and even Candy Castle is missing. In order to find them, it takes travels through the Peppermint Forest, over Gumdrop Pass and into the Lollipop Woods.

***Berenstain Bears Junior Jigsaw* contains ten bear puzzles, each with four difficulty levels.**

Up to four players can compete to find the king, or a single child can play against a computer opponent. A touch of the space bar draws an instruction card and moves the Gingerbread Man down the Rainbow Trail. It's the same simple finish-first race to the Candy Castle that has delighted generations of children as a board game. The computer graphics are far from state-of-the-art, but it's a fun play experience for three- to six-year-olds.

GameTek is also the publisher of Fisher-Price's *Firehouse Rescue* (Apple II, Commodore 64, IBM PC). The child can use a joystick or keyboard to move the fire truck through a maze of streets. One house flashes (to represent the fire), and the child rescues the children or pets using cursor keys to posi-

tion the truck under the window.

Firehouse Rescue actually has multiple skill levels to make it a little more challenging as the child becomes more competent at rescues. Upper levels have more mazes, time limits and hidden objects to find, but the game is never too difficult. The low-res graphics are styled similarly to Fisher-Price's "Little People," using uncomplicated backgrounds to represent the city streets and buildings.

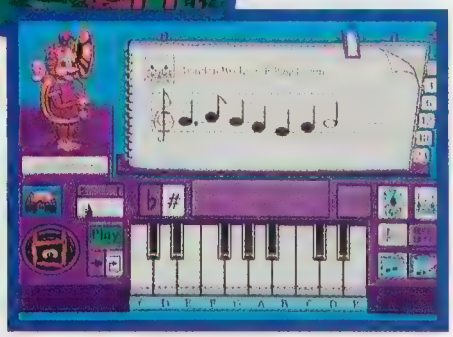
***The Playhouse*, by Brøderbund, provides an on-screen environment for kids to explore.**

Britannica Software has an electronic puzzle for gamers aged 4-10. *The Berenstain Bears Junior Jigsaw* (IBM PC) contains ten bear puzzles, each with four difficulty levels. These skill adjustments break the pictures into 8, 15, 40 or 60 pieces. The child uses mouse or keyboard control to jockey the pieces into their proper positions.

The bears are clever and attractive and true to their license. This is a great entertainment for bruin-lovers. The puzzles are easy at the lower levels, but may provide challenge even for mom and pop at the top settings.

***The Treehouse* should be on retailers' shelves in time for Christmas.**

Brøderbund's *Kid Pix* (IBM PC, Macintosh) turns a paint program into a toy box for kids, in a creativity entertainment that's usable from age three on up. It has all the ingredients of a regular art program, plus lots of fancy extras that make it a delight for young users.

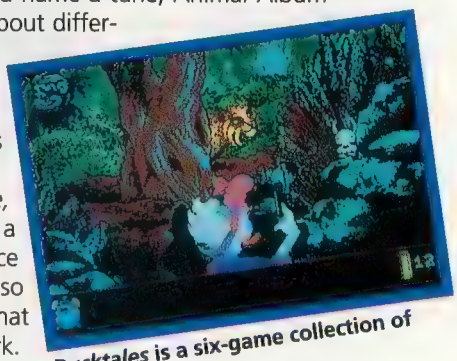


Kid Pix contains over a hundred images to "rubber stamp" onto drawings, wacky brushes that create weird designs, special effects that make paintings almost come to life, connect-a-dots, sound effects and even hidden pictures that show up when you erase the canvas. This is a magnificent, top-of-the-line program that will provide kids and adults many hours of artistic fun.

Brøderbund's *The Playhouse* (Apple II, IBM PC, Macintosh) is an on-screen environment for children to explore. Pictured on the screen is an attractive room filled with toys and entertainments. The child uses point-and-click technology to activate all the objects, such as the cuckoo clock, an on-screen computer, a mouse hole, an ABC book, spinner toy, radio, fishbowl and others. Each leads to further discoveries.

The Playhouse is an early-learning program that teaches basic skills in reading and arithmetic. But the educational aspects are so well integrated into the exploration, few children will notice the lessons mixed in with the fun.

The Treehouse (Brøderbund/Apple II, Macintosh, IBM PC) follows *The Playhouse* and should be on retailers' shelves in time for Christmas. It features an on-screen treehouse as the main view. The child chooses a boy or girl opossum as companion, then explores the games and activities. There's a chalkboard for drawing, a magic telescope, a calendar that shows interesting events that happened on that date and six special games. Puppet Theater acts out sentences; Road Rally takes the child to the zoo, ice cream parlor and other destinations; Musical Keys is a simple music program; Musical Maze requires the child to identify instruments and name-a-tune; Animal Album teaches a lot of facts about different creatures and provides pictures to be printed out; and Guess My Animal gives clues for the child to identify.



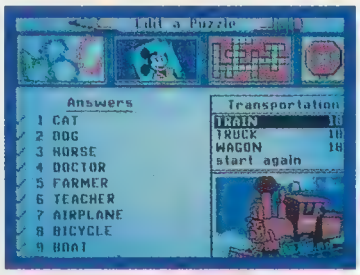
***Ducktales* is a six-game collection of treasure hunts.**

Like *The Playhouse*, *The Treehouse* is a teaching program. Once again, the learning is so incidental to the fun that it hardly seems like work.

No one knows kids better than Disney, and there are few playmates more lovable than the Disney critters. The company has a well-conceived line of early-educational products, but they also offer a couple of titles that are just for fun. *Mickey's Crossword Puzzle Maker* (Apple II, IBM PC) contains an almost limitless supply of puzzles created from the program's internal dictionary, and kids can also design their own puzzles, then print them out.

The game uses over 150 pictures with many Disney characters, such as Bambi, Dumbo and Peter Pan. These provide colorful backgrounds for the jigsaws, as well as picture clues of the words. The program is meant for gamers from kindergarten to third grade. Some reading skills are needed for successful play.

Ducktales: The Quest for Gold (Disney/Amiga, Commodore 64, IBM PC) is a six-game collection of treasure hunts that lead Disney characters on a search for gold. The locales are splendid, ranging from "Whatsamatterhorn" to the caves of Ali Baba, making great backrounds for dodging mummies, lightning storms, attacking aliens and more. This adventure features lots of action and cute graphics of the Disney gang.



***Mickey's Crossword Puzzle Maker* contains an almost unlimited supply of puzzles.**

Games for young kids represent a real challenge to designers. Play mechanics must be kept easy enough for nonreaders, but challenging enough to hold youngsters' interest. These represent some of the best available.

Learning programs are jim-dandy; they do the job, and kids benefit immensely from computer-aided education. But all work and no play is a dull venue, especially for a child. Why not give the kids a break? Let them try some real funware, and watch their eyes light up!

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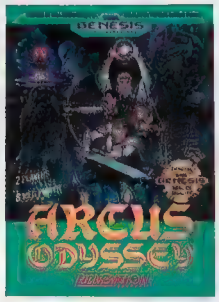
Professional gamer David Izat knows a lot about fun and games, especially with Arcus Odyssey. Equipped with 8 meg graphic power, Arcus Odyssey is pure strategy. With up to four warriors (two warriors per game) work your way through daring levels and mind boggling mazes, and as you master each level, your weapons become stronger. Challenge your mind by finding hidden clues; reward yourself with hidden treasures. Now that you've learned the basics, ask the ultimate question; are you ready to learn a thing or two about fun?



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COMPUTER GAME REVIEWS

California Games II

EPYX

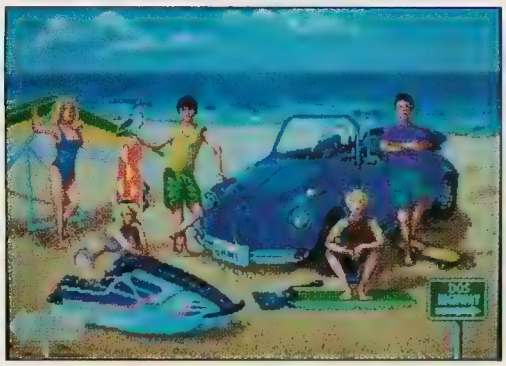
Version: IBM PC ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10

Like most of Epyx's multiple-event packages, *California Games II* is a mixed bag. Some of the five events are pretty tubular, while others eat wet sand. Let's go over them one by one.

Skateboarding is one of *CGII*'s strongest events, set as it is in the California Aqueduct, which, we are told, has been drained for cleaning. The empty pipes and halfpipes of the Aqueduct make an ideal surface for skateboarding, especially when rendered in pseudo first-person perspective. An overview of the entire route appears on the right side of the screen.

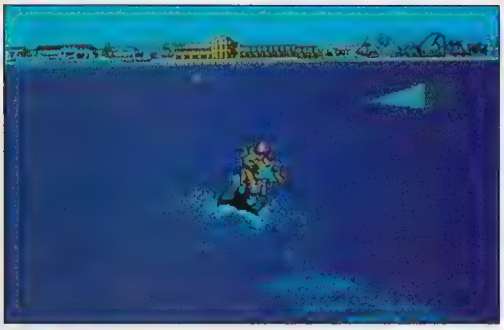
The most entertaining event in this package, however, is hang gliding. Check the wind direction, then leap off a mountaintop for an exhilarating glide over the pounding surf. Three targets float in the water below, and the object of this event is for the player to drop water balloons on them. The angled side perspective used in this event suits it perfectly.



Bodyboarding is a catch-the-wave event that doesn't. The problem is the game's angled side perspective, which doesn't remotely suggest the thrills associated with actually riding a wave. There are people and objects to dodge on the way in, but they aren't visible until they appear on the right side of the horizontally scrolling screen.

Jet surfing is another disappointment, though at least the pseudo first-person perspective is the appropriate point of view. The gamer chooses among five variously configured courses: the ring (a simple circle), captain hook (a combination of straightaways and one severe loop), icky (lots of sharp turns), super slalom (lots of mild turns) and ramp-o-mania (which introduces jumping into the game). The player steers a surfjet (a sort of Harley-Davidson for water babies) through a course marked by red and yellow buoys. The ramp-o-mania course is far and away the most interesting, with the addition of ramps significantly enlivening play.

***California Games II* isn't likely to sweep a lot of gaming awards, but it's an entertaining package with two solid events.**



Snowboarding qualifies as one of the strangest events in electronic-gaming history. This event uses an angled side perspective to portray the sport of snow-

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boarding, which basically consists of riding down a snow-covered mountain on a flat board. Again, the side perspective doesn't work, but what makes this game memorable is the fact that the player must take his or her surrogate up the mountain by piloting a helicopter!

The graphics in *California Games II* are just average, but there are some cute bits of business that help increase the fun quotient of the game. When a bodyboarder gets wiped out on the way to shore, for example, he washes in on the tide, face first—or else just the board does. In the skateboarding event, the game developers crossed the line into bad taste. If a player-character misjudges his approach to a fullpipe and runs into the brick casing, he leaves a splattering of blood on the bricks as he collapses to the ground in a heap.

Other than that, there are plenty of cute, California-type comments and animated sequences to keep players smiling even after a wipeout. It isn't likely to sweep a lot of gaming awards, but *California Games II* is an entertaining enough package with at least two solid events.

—Bill Kunkel

Epyx
600 Allerton St.
Redwood City, CA 94063
(415) 368-3200

James Bond: The Stealth Affair

INTERPLAY

Versions: Amiga ($54.95), Atari ST ($54.95), IBM PC ($54.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Games from other countries will always find a warm welcome in America when they are of the same quality as *James Bond: The Stealth Affair.*

Originally called *Operation: Stealth*, it was designed by Delphine Software in Europe without James Bond as the special agent. Delphine's previous American release was *Future Wars* (also from Interplay). Both games use Delphine's cinematic system that relies on menus to enter commands.

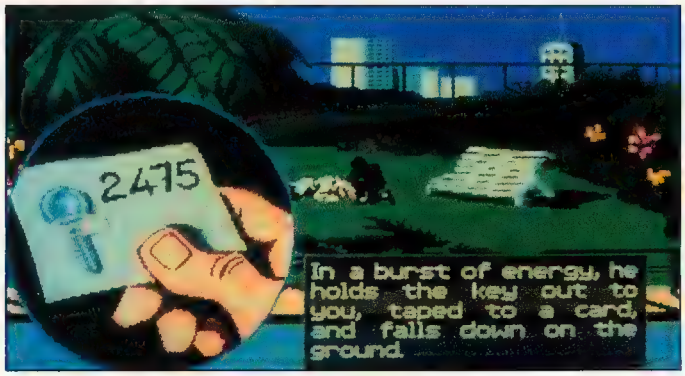
The Stealth Affair puts the player in the shoes of Her Majesty's most famous spy. True to form, Bond has a lot of tricky objects that come in handy in dangerous situations. They include a watch cable, a cutting pen and rocket-launching cigarettes. These gimmicks reside in the false bottom of Bond's briefcase, which can only be opened in a discreet location. Sometimes finding a place to open the case is a puzzle unto itself.

It is Bond's job to discover what happened to the latest version of America's Stealth bomber. The secret plane has been stolen, and the suspects are General Manigua of the small country of Santa Paragua, the Russian KBG and possibly an unknown organized crime boss. America needs Bond to recover the plane and take out the opposition quietly to avoid an international incident.

This game has an interesting and exciting plot and could quite possibly be turned into a movie. With all of its gimmicks, tense situations and exotic locations, *The Stealth Affair* keeps the attention of its players. Commands are entered through a menu using either the keyboard (IBM only) or mouse (all systems). The command menu pops up at the cursor location for convenience and consists of the following commands: examine, take, inventory, use, operate and speak. That's it! The system is so easy to use, the player can almost do without the manual and get right into the game.

There are many intermission screens that move the story along, but they get boring after the second or third viewing. In addition, there are a few arcade sequences that can be trying. Be sure to save the game before an attempt at these mini-games.

The Stealth Affair's graphics look a little dreary and cartoonish, not as stylish as the art in *Future Wars.* However, most objects in the game are clearly visible and larger than a few pixels. Fortunately, the graphics are enlivened by the intermission screens and animations, which are much better than the stills.



Gamers might agree that *James Bond: The Stealth Affair* has an interesting and exciting enough plot to be made into a motion picture.

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They help develop the plot and add the "cinema" to the cinematic system.

The sound effects and music in *The Stealth Affair* are impressive for their small touches of accuracy. For example, in the airport you hear the echo of Bond's footsteps on the ground. Jean Baudlot composed the music in the game. Although not as grandiose as his compositions for *Future Wars, The Stealth Affair's* score definitely heightens tension.

Everything about *The Stealth Affair* was done very well, except for the arcade sequences. Graphics and sounds combine well with the puzzles and story to accurately represent Ian Fleming's famous character.

—Russ Ceccola

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Pick'N Pile

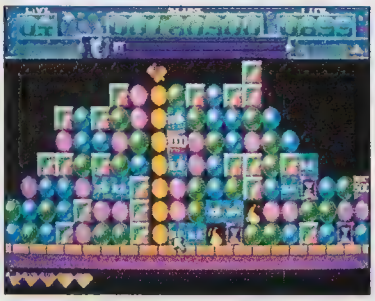
UBI SOFT
Versions: Amiga ($39.95), Apple II ($39.95), Atari ST ($39.95), Commodore 64 ($29.95), IBM PC ($39.95), Macintosh ($39.95)

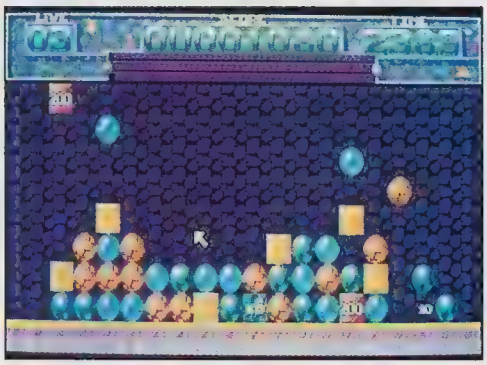
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

Pick'N Pile is a reviewer's dream and a reviewer's nightmare both at the same time. It's a dream because it is a very easy game to play: Just arrange the objects so that they disappear from the screen. It is a reviewer's nightmare because it is incredibly addicting. Every time I sat down to check some small point about the game, I ended up playing it for an hour!

Pick'N Pile is a strategy game, with just a hint of arcade action thrown in. At the beginning of each round, objects cascade from the top of the screen and pile up at the bottom. Most of the items are brightly colored balls, but there are other things thrown in as well. The idea is to stack identical objects by first selecting one thing, then another. This process swaps their positions. Once an entire stack is made up of balls of the same color, the stack disappears.

Ubi Soft's *Pick'N Pile* may not have the best graphics and sound, but it's guaranteed to give you hours of enjoyment with its addicting game play.



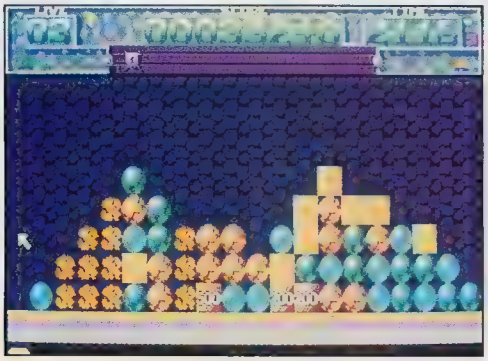


There are, of course, complicating factors. The most difficult is a time limit—run out of time before clearing a screen, and you will lose one of three lives. There are bonus hourglass shapes to help out in this regard. They add 200 to the time count if they are part of a stack of balls made to disappear. On the other hand, there are death heads in the higher screens that make time run out faster.

Other bonuses include point multipliers and bonus point objects. There are also bombs that explode, removing the eight objects around them, and flames that burn anything above them.

Physics also gets into the game. When a stack disappears, it obviously leaves a gap. After a moment's hesitation, the adjacent objects start falling into that gap, changing the whole layout of the screen. If the player is really quick, however, it's still possible to swap objects and make them disappear before they drop into the gap. This requires careful planning as well as finely tuned reflexes. Wall sections can be used with good advantage in order to minimize the changes that occur when a stack is removed—the wall sections are stable and won't fall into a gap and can also keep other objects from falling.

The final complication is that there's no



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way to remove anything piled in a single row across the bottom of the screen. The player must cause more items to fall from the top in the hopes of getting a setup that will permit the screen to be cleared.

The strong point for *Pick'N Pile* is its playability. It's immensely addicting. The graphics are colorful but not inspired; and the sound consists entirely of digitized cash register noises and breaking-glass noises—hardly what you would call taxing the capabilities of the Amiga! Still, if strategy is your bag, this game is challenging and different enough to be recommended.

—Dave Plotkin

Electronic Arts
1820 Gateway Drive
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Arachnophobia

DISNEY SOFTWARE

Versions: Amiga ($49.95), Commodore 64 ($49.95), IBM PC ($49.95), (with Sound Source $69.95)

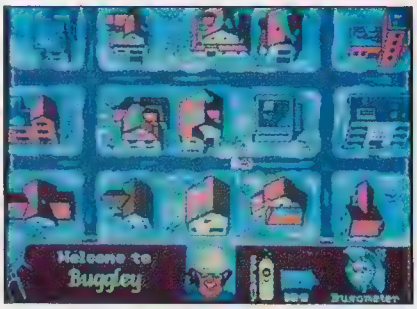
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

It had to happen. Sooner or later the perfectionists at Disney were bound to get tired of seeing their beloved properties misused and abused by "outside" publishers. The result: Walt Disney Computer Software, Inc. The first few releases by Uncle Walt's software arm were ho-hum kid games that tied into Disney's own Sound Source, a low-priced PC audio system/speaker. *Arachnophobia* represents Disney's first for-all-ages game release based on a major film property, and the results should have gamers everywhere licking their lips in anticipation of such future delights as *Dick Tracy* and *The Rocketeer.*

Arachnophobia, developed by BlueSky Software, offers a by-the-numbers design that really works. The pleasant visuals, good sound, solid movie-based story line and superb game play combine to create a compulsively playable experience.

The game begins with the player, as Delbert McClintock, cruising the streets of Canaima, a town infested with arachnids, the spawn of an especially deadly, not to mention fertile, South American spider, who hitched a ride back to the states in the coffin of a dead scientist. The South American arachnid then mated with local spiders to produce three variety of arachnids: soldiers, queens and South American. The player can drive Delbert up to any of the neighborhood's 14 houses and begin man's attempt to retake his territory.

Based on the popular movie of the same name, *Arachnophobia* represents Disney's first for-all-ages game release.



Once inside a residence, the game switches to a split-level side perspective that allows the player to see the room Delbert is in, as well as the room directly above or below him. These multilevel houses contain not only armies of arachnids, but some pleasant surprises as well, including a first aid kit that restores the player to peak physical condition and additional anti-bug weapons.

Delbert is armed with three weapons: bug bombs, which wipe out every spider in a room but are limited in number; an insecticide spray gun, which can be aimed three ways in either direction; and the good old, environmentally approved boot, which stomps soldiers into spider paste.

Clearing out a neighborhood, however, is only the start of the assignment. There are many more towns out there waiting for their exterminator in shining armor, and once America is cleansed, the United Nations has an assignment in the Amazon for Mr. McClintock!

One note of warning: true arachnophobes will want to avoid *Arachnophobia* as if it were coated in tarantula larvae. The scenes in which the spiders sting the player-character to death would give even a spider fan the heebie-jeebies. Then again, *true* arachnophobes probably wouldn't even read this *review.*

—B. K.

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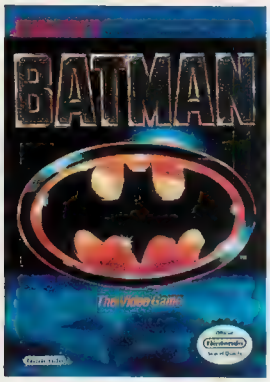

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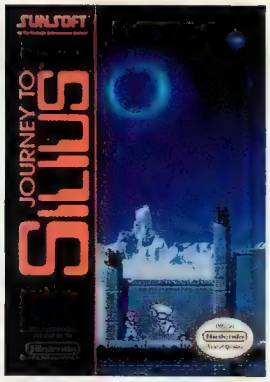

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Oil's Well

SIERRA ON-LINE
Version: IBM PC ($34.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10

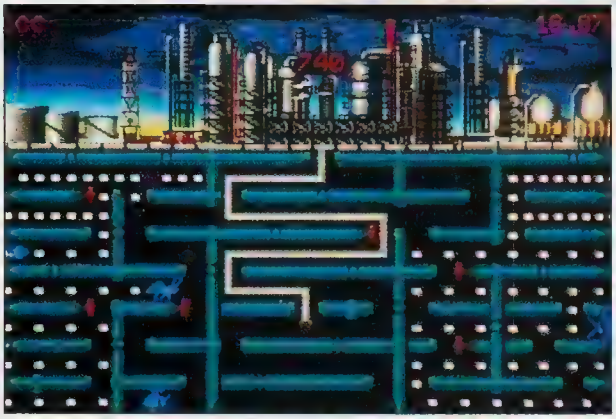
This arcade-quality game originally produced by Sierra in 1982 has now been totally revamped with excellent VGA graphics. Sound board support was added, as well as a humorous dinosaur named Slater, who just happened to get stuck in the middle of this.

The goal seems simple enough. The player must collect all the oil pellets on each level while avoiding such hazards as bugs, snakes and the like. If these creatures cross the drill pipe while the player is working his way through the maze, a drill bit will be lost. To avoid losing a life, the drill must be retracted back to its starting point before the nasty little insects touch the pipe. As if this weren't hard enough, an occasional mine is thrown in to blow up the drill. To top it off there is a time limit.

After each level is cleared, the player is treated to an intermission. Unknown to the driller, a friendly petrosaur, the last of his kind, lives in the oil field. As the player busily collects oil, Slater, the petrosaur, is minding his own business as his underground house falls down around him. These graphic sequences are enough to keep the gamer playing just to see what happens to this cute guy. In one scene he is enjoying a nice bath as the drill comes through the tub, and poor Slater is sucked down the drain. In another, the drill takes away his large, plump turkey just before Slater can bite into it. If the player can hang in through all eight levels, he won't be displeased with the conclusion. Although Slater's home life is repeatedly disturbed by the drilling, there is a happy ending.

The only drawback to the game is the joystick play. Sierra recommends joystick control, but using the keyboard actually proved to be substantially easier. The fast movements required seemed too much for the stick.

The music during the opening sequence and throughout the game is a good example of Sierra's mastery of current audio equipment. The sound effects are equally pleasing; they provide an all-around arcade feel to the game.



Originally released in 1982, *Oil's Well* is a delightful diversion and a nice change from "the thinking man's games" that usually come from Sierra.

The graphics in EGA mode and lower are good, but the game really shines in VGA mode. The non-interactive graphic sequences in VGA are so attractive, they could almost stand alone as entertainments.

Once the control technique is mastered and the player begins to know the game, the difficulty level can be increased. In the "regular" level the only creatures are small insects, but in the "unleaded" and "premium" levels large grasshoppers, snakes, worms, centipedes and other creepy creatures show up. These harder levels keep the game challenging for quite a while.

Oil's Well is a delightful diversion and a nice change from "the thinking man's games" that usually come from Sierra. No great intelligence is required, just a desire to relax and have fun. If the player wants a high-speed shoot-'em-up action game or a complex arcade contest, he can go elsewhere. But for pure, unadulterated fun that the whole family can enjoy together, *Oil's Well* is really slick.

—David Ethell

Sierra On-Line, Inc.
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(209) 683-4468

Death Knights of Krynn

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Versions: Amiga ($49.95), Commodore 64 ($39.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	**6**	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

This return to the world of Krynn is especially welcome to gamers already familiar with the realm either through the Dragonlance series of books or the earlier SSI AD&D release *Champions of Krynn*. Another quest in the land is all the more enjoyable, since characters from the original title can be ported into the new

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OFFER EXPIRES NOVEMBER 27, 1991

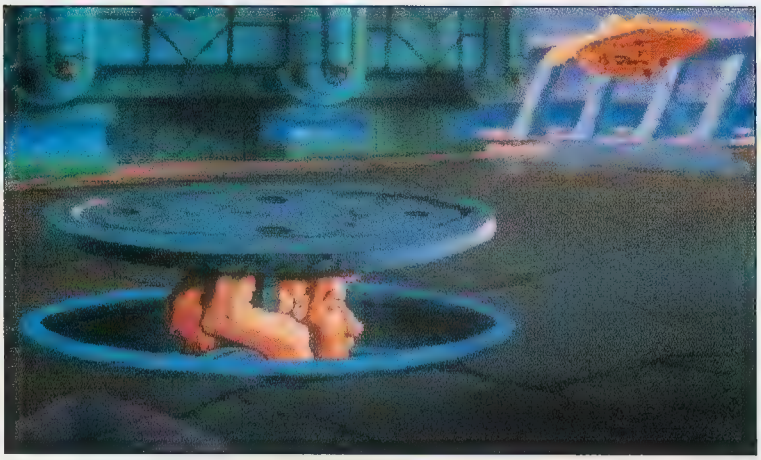
continued from page 94

Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers

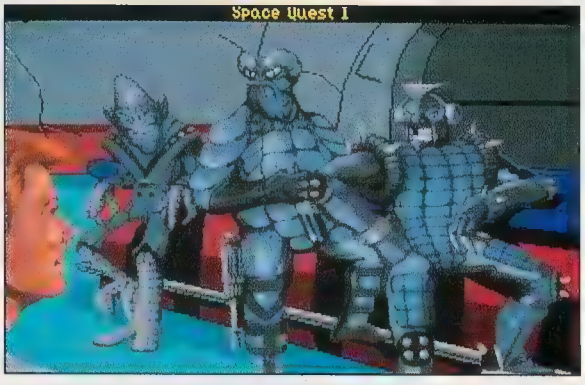
SIERRA ON-LINE, INC.
Versions: Amiga ($59.95), Atari ST ($59.95), IBM PC ($59.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10

The two guys from Andromeda are back at last with Sierra's latest in the popular *Space Quest* series. After what seemed like an interminably long wait, *Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers* casts the gamer in the role of lovable Roger Wilco, space janitor and the Rodney Dangerfield of outer space. In his latest adventure, Roger must avoid the sequel police throughout time in a plot that gets more interesting as the story moves along.



Part *Back to the Future*-style time travel and part wacky and irreverent humor, *Space Quest IV* picks up immediately after *Space Quest III: The Pirates of Pestulon.* Two sequel policeman encounter Roger in the bar on Magmetheus and arrest him. Roger escapes into a rip in time and turns up in the era of *Space Quest XII: Vohaul's Revenge II.* From this point forward, Roger must stay one step ahead of the sequel police and get to the bottom of all this time-travel nonsense. In his journeys, he warps back to two other *Space Quest* sequels and runs into many weird and colorful aliens.



***Space Quest IV* combines *Back to the Future*-style time travel with part wacky and irreverent humor.**

Space Quest IV has almost none of the frustrating let's-smash-the-computer puzzles that marred previous games. This makes it a lot more enjoyable than most of the other Sierra titles. Another plus is the new Sierra interface. There is no typing required at all. Instead, the mouse, joystick or (if you're desperate) keyboard selects icons from a bar that contains walk, look, action, talk, smell, taste, inventory, system and help icons. The smell and taste icons are new to *Space Quest IV* and will be part of the standard Sierra interface in the future. Also enclosed is a generic interface/troubleshooting manual (in addition to the snazzy *Space Quest IV* issue of *Space Piston* magazine that serves as the manual).

The teleportation vehicle in *Space Quest IV* is a time pod. It has a panel with three rows of icons from which a combination of six make up a time-travel code. If the code selected is valid, the time pod will transport Roger to that time period. Experimentation with codes may reveal "Easter egg" locations, one of which is *Space Quest III.* Time travel adds a lot of fun to the game, and the warping sequence is graphically very nice.

In fact, all graphics in *Space Quest IV* are at the peak of current technology, especially in 256-color VGA. The animation sequences look a lot more like cartoons than in previous games, and the variety of colors is large. Brand-new to the game are scrolling graphics, and as a first attempt for Sierra, this technique turned out very well. The movements are fluid, but it does take a second after moving off the edge of one screen before the next one scrolls into view. Still, it looks very nice, and the spatial orientation gained from this effect is necessary to solve a puzzle or two as well as to determine Roger's relative position.

Space Quest IV supports all major sound boards, and it's a completely different experience to play the new generation of Sierra games with an installed audio board. The music and sound effects are incredible. Like a good movie soundtrack, it is essential for the total experience to hear the game in stereo. Sounds as faint as wisps of blowing sand fill your ears, along with explosions and growling monsters and the great background music by Mark Seibert.

Space Quest IV: Roger Wilco and the Time Rippers is a perfect marriage of Sierra's interface, excellent graphics and sound and the storytelling talents of the two guys from Andromeda, Mark Crowe and Scott Murphy. The game has everything from obnoxious aliens and parodies of other popular computer entertainments to a galactic mall complete with an arcade and a little mechanical bunny with a big

bass drum. Because it is not as difficult and frustrating as past Sierra games, *Space Quest IV* is a must-buy for fans of the series and others looking for a good, funny sci-fi spoof. The ending is disappointing because it leaves the story wide open in some areas, but the path to that ending involves a lot of challenges and enjoyment.

Now if they would only hurry up with *Space Quest V!*

—R. C.

Sierra On-Line, Inc.
P.O. Box 485
Coarsegold, CA 93614
(209) 683-4468

HoverForce

ACCOLADE

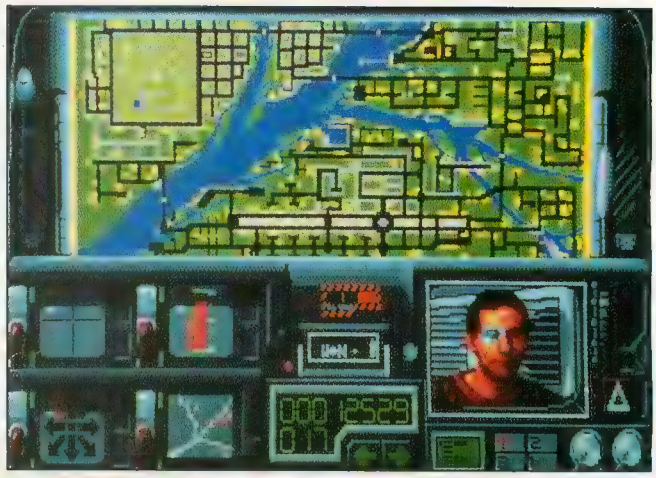
Versions: Amiga ($49.95), IBM PC ($49.95)

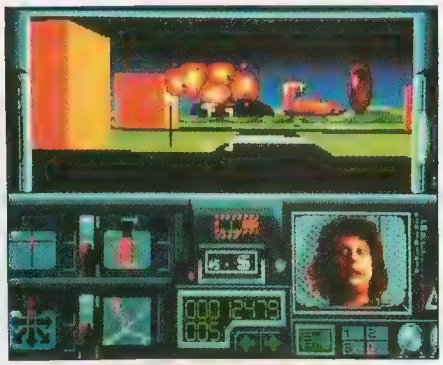
SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	**9**	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Arcade "level" entertainments are a dime a dozen, but not all of them live up to expectations. The secret for success in games of this type is that they must be hard enough to challenge the player so that the urge to finish just one more level is there, while remaining easy enough to provide a sense of accomplishment. *HoverForce* is this brand of game.

Fast-paced and pleasantly addictive, *HoverForce* puts the player in an assault skimmer to tackle a deadly breed of criminal called Alterants. As a member of the Red Wasp Unit, the gamer must retrieve canisters of a contraband biotech serum, collect drug money to replenish shields and ammunition and capture Alterants after accumulating enough canisters as evidence. The manual for *HoverForce* is almost unnecessary. Anyone can learn the game in a few minutes. Then it will take hours of crime-fighting to arrest the most powerful Alterant.

HoverForce combines an arcade shoot-'em-up with fast flying. The perspective is from the cockpit of the assault skimmer. Radar shows the direction of enemy vehicles and henchmen, color-coded according to aggression level. Also on the skimmer dashboard are a shield indicator, compass, directional arrow, map, evidence counter and resource (money) counter.





Accolade's *HoverForce* is the perfect challenge for someone interested in a fast-paced arcade game.

The mouse turns the skimmer, the left button propels the vehicle forward and the right button fires the current weapon. The player may also use the keyboard, but this can be awkward. Function keys switch to machine gun, cannon or missiles, display a larger map and change the directional arrow from the Alterant to the nearest supply warehouse.

Game play is simple, almost mindless. As the Alterant makes his way across the landscape, he leaves henchmen to keep the player busy. The goal is to shoot these bad guys, collect what they leave behind (either money or a drug canister) and try to get enough canisters so that the Alterant will die when shot. The Alterant follows a set pattern until his drug run is complete. If he is still free at that point, the player loses a life.

The Alterant flies an easy-to-recognize orange ship, and a white dot represents him on the radar. The player must kill each Alterant three times, after which a new Alterant and quadrant offer resistance. It is important to stop along the way to buy ammunition, power boosters and any of the dashboard systems rendered inoperable by enemy fire. There is not a lot of time to kill each Alterant, so shopping must be kept brief.

One important thing to remember is that the skimmer can't travel over water. If it touches water, the pocket of air goes away and the vehicle sinks.

The 3-D graphics provide you with a street-level perspective. Buildings popu-

late the landscape and act as obstacles to progress. The best way to get somewhere quickly is to use the roads of the city's quadrant, where the craft can zip along at maximum speed.

The dashboard looks nice, and all necessary indicators are shown clearly, except perhaps the money and canister counters. A digitized picture of the Alterant pops up on the dashboard every time he is hurt or he stages a small victory. His facial expression registers anger or happiness and thus indicates how close you are to finishing him off. The soundtrack to *HoverForce* is very intense. The explosions and other sound effects come across well and help enhance the play experience.

HoverForce is the perfect challenge for someone interested in a fast-paced arcade game. It is especially manic if the radar is knocked out when the Alterant has almost finished his drug run, and only one or two more canisters are needed. Most people enjoy this type of game play because they truly get their money's worth of excitement and challenge. *HoverForce* will rack up a lot of hours of use on your computer and drive you crazy with delight.

—R. C.

Accolade
550 South Winchester Blvd.
San Jose, CA 95128
(408) 985-1700

Strip Poker Three

ARTWORX

Version: IBM PC ($49.95)

SOUND/MUSIC	1	2	3	**4**	5	6	7	8	9	10
GRAPHICS	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
PLAYABILITY	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	**7**	8	9	10

One of the most enduring software successes of the past half-decade, Artworx' *Strip Poker* has probably appeared on more varied computer systems than any game since *Zork*. In addition to the scores of extra disks containing an impressive variety of female *and* male opposition, Artworx periodically reworks the entire program. This is the case with the latest evolutionary step in high-stakes, computerized card-playing, *Strip Poker Three*.

No stupendous innovations this time out, but the digitizing is cleaner, and the three female opponents supplied with the disk have a refreshingly earthy appeal. The major new wrinkle is the introduction of multiple-player games and the use of an on-screen male player-surrogate who will "give up his all," if necessary, in two and three-handed games.

The primary computer-controlled female player appears in a large window

***Strip Poker Three*, by Artworx, offers multiple-player card games and a new assortment of digitized opponents.**

while two other on-screen players appear in a pair of smaller windows to its right. A maximum of three players can appear in any one game. The cards are displayed along the bottom of the playfield, as in the past.

Otherwise, *Strip Poker Three* holds no real surprises for players familiar with the series. The game once again combines a poker program, digitized photographs of women—and, in this case, one man—in various stages of dress, or undress, along with sarcastic comments from the computerized players. It all adds up to a pretty fair simulation of every male adolescent's favorite fantasy card game.

The interface for the five-card draw style poker game is trusty, if unremarkable, with one exception: hitting the space bar at any time during the game gives *Strip Poker Three* the silicon equivalent of a nervous breakdown, necessitating a time-consuming reload procedure. It's also true that some of the photos don't hold up to the reduction process required to fit three characters simultaneously on-screen, and these pictures don't look acceptable in the smaller windows.

Otherwise, *Strip Poker Three* delivers exactly what it promises, and that's a worthy accomplishment for *any* piece of entertainment software.

—B. K.

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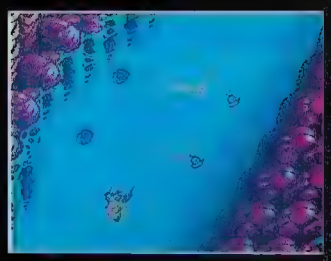
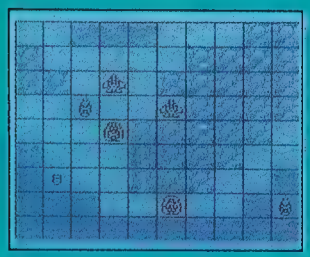
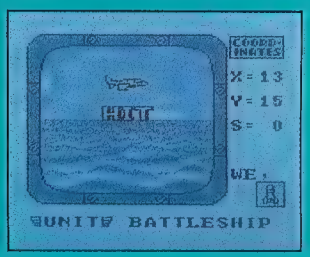


Power Mission simulates a realistic sea battle against a powerful enemy force. Select and deploy one of seven fleets and then destroy the enemy using radar, missiles and various weapons. Power Mission has 10 stages and the enemy gets stronger and stronger. Prepare yourself for this challenging, strategic, Game Boy game!





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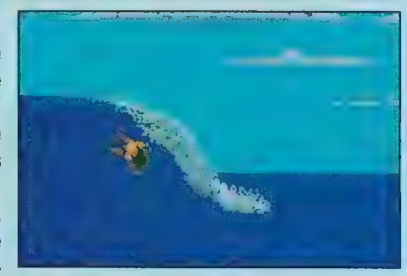
Fun in the Sun With California Games II

EPYX
Version: IBM PC

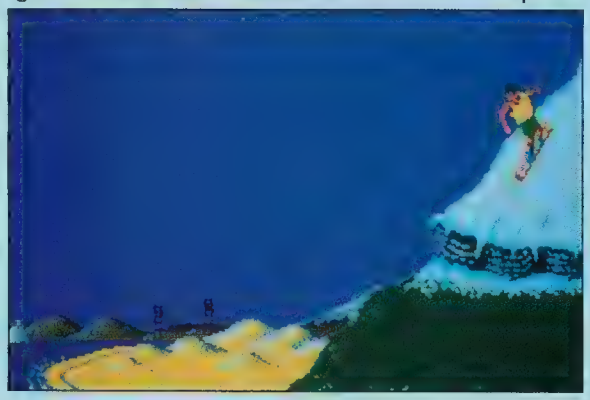
In this fast-paced sequel, gamers return to California to try five totally new events. One to eight players compete for the highest point total at the end of the group of events. *California Games II* also keeps track of records for each event, so players may compete alone to achieve the highest ranking on the "most excellent dudes" screen.

Hang Gliding

The secret to hang gliding is to find and use the thermals that raise the glider back up to higher altitudes. Start the game by jumping off the ledge when the sock is blowing to the left only. Then, immediately stall and dive toward the lower right-hand side of the screen. About three-fourths of the way down, press to the upper left and loop out of the dive. These loops are the big money moves and should be done as often as possible.



Once the glider begins to get low, ride level until the glider seems to rise a bit. This is a thermal area. Begin circling in this area with upper diagonal keys, and the glider will rise. Try to hit the targets with the balloons early on to get rid of them so you can concentrate on loops and stalls. Remember that the higher a balloon falls into a target, the more it's worth.



Jet Surfing

This is a pretty straightforward event played much like *Pole Position*. At the onset, be sure to pick the correct jet for the course chosen. Try to use the bigger jets on the simpler courses, because the bigger jets are harder to control.

Once you're in the water, hit the space bar to accelerate through the straightaways. Traveling at a high speed between buoys is the single best way to rack up points. When approaching a curve, judge the steepness of the turn, and use the appropriate turn keys. This takes some practice, but always remember to lean into a turn early on so the jet can maintain a higher speed through the curve. Finally, pick up bottles only if they are not far from the designated course. They are not valuable enough to make straying out of the markers worthwhile.

Snowboarding

Maneuver the helicopter to the icy section of the mountain, and drop the snowboarder when the chopper is about one inch from the side of the mountain. Once there, begin left and right motion immediately, since this is the only way to slow the board down. Try to stay in the middle of the course, since it is easier to move left and right in this area. When a ridge appears across the trail, hit the space bar just as the front of the board touches it. This last-second jump strategy ensures clearing the ridge. In the snowbowl, use the left and right arrows to build up speed. Once the boarder is flying over the edges, hit the left arrow when he's on the right edge and vice versa to do air loops and earn bonus points. Hitting the space bar when the boarder is on the edge will cause him to do a handstand for still more points. When you're ready to exit the bowl, hit the space bar when the boarder is up over the left edge.

Bodyboarding

Once the wave appears, immediately press left to head up the wave. Once the surfer is halfway up, press the space bar and then the right key while releasing the space bar. This causes the surfer to barrel roll, which is worth big points. The second the surfer hits the bottom of the wave, repeat this move immediately. If players execute this move in rapid succession, the game awards scores of over 15,000 points! Off the lip and reverse cut moves are worth significant points, but they can-

not be done in rapid succession, so the big points can't be racked up as easily.

When the wave breaks, stay toward the middle of the screen, this makes it easier to move up or down as needed when obstacles approach.

Skateboarding

This event is easy to learn, but hard to master. Start by pressing to the left, since the man begins at the right every time. Keep the rhythm going by pressing the left key just as the man peaks at his right swing and vise versa. Once you're airborne over an edge, pressing the opposing direction will make the man do a loop in the air and is worth big points. Do these as often as possible, but keep a careful eye on the map to see when a tunnel is approaching. Once the red dot gets about a half inch in front of a tunnel, press the opposing direction key when the man is at the bottom of the trench. This will stop him from riding high on the wall as the full-pipe approaches, which would result in death and the end of that event.

Once you're in the full pipe, rock left and right, and try to corkscrew over the top. Watch the map so you'll be able to pull out of the corkscrew before the tunnel ends. If you don't, it's a pavement sandwich for you, dude!

—Frank Tetro, Jr.

Scouting the Roads in Highway Patrol II

TITUS SOFTWARE
Versions: Amiga, Atari ST, IBM PC

Highway Patrol II is more than just a driving game; it also requires careful strategic planning to catch those criminals without destroying your own car. Unfortunately, most players only realize this after many failing attempts. So here are some tips to start off on the right foot.

The first thing to do when beginning a new chase is to hit the pause button. This will allow the driver to thoroughly, and at leisure, check on the criminal's location and the police car's starting position. There are only three places from which the patrol car begins the game. They're marked A, B and C on the map.

Because of the many twists and turns on the map, it is difficult to anticipate the robber's movements. The best bet is to head in the general direction of the robber's car and only make turns after the police car is within three squares of the robber. This approach seems to work well, especially in higher levels.

Always take advantage of the player's ability to pause the game to check on the cars' locations. The most important information lies at the top of the screen: the coordinates. Also pay attention to the view from the police car's window.

Drive across the desert only in extreme emergencies. A police car is not meant to drive over dust balls, rocks and cacti! Only when the score approaches zero should cross-country driving be considered. It's nice that *Highway Patrol II* allows the player to make this choice. Actually, it is not terribly difficult to navigate across the desert if the player goes slow enough and uses reasonable care.

When gas gets low or the police car gets a flat because the player decided to act like the Lone Ranger in the desert, get to a gas station immediately. It is still possible to capture the criminal, but it's more important to keep the car in running condition. Even if the gas station is in a different direction, slow down, turn around and fill 'er up.

Extended use of the police car in the red area of the tachometer will blow the engine, but that doesn't mean you can't do it at all. Push the car every now and then into that area to gain more points and distance. Only an extended time "in the red" will actually destroy the car, so ease the needle in and out of that range to get the most out of the vehicle.

In the higher levels of the game, the criminals are very tough to capture. Ramming into their cars is sometimes necessary, but don't do this too much, or the police car will blow up. Try to shoot out the tires of the red cars, even in the first and second levels. All it wastes are bullets. Because the robbers in higher levels are more experienced and quicker, follow a path to a location far ahead of where the criminal might head. This tactic will eliminate a lot of unnecessary effort.

Most important, stay alert and scan the horizon for the criminal's car. It's the only red car in the game, and seeing it from afar will sometimes give you an advantage, even if it means you have to cut across the desert.

Highway Patrol II can provide a challenging experience for compu-drivers. Use your head, try to outthink the criminals, and take good care of your vehicle, and you'll capture the bad guys and keep the highways safe.

—Russ Ceccola

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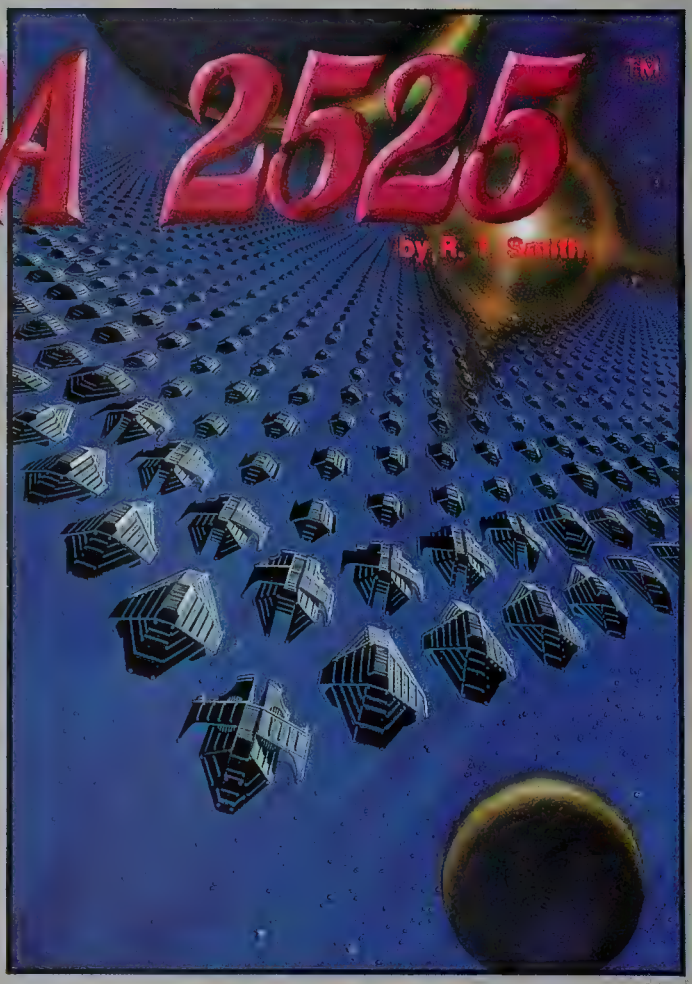

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ADVENTURES IN CUTENESS

by
Maurice Molyneaux

In every field of artistic endeavor there are genres into which most items can be securely plugged. In video gaming there is no shortage of these genres. Most games can be plugged into one of a handful of categories, ranging from scrolling adventures to shoot-'em-ups.

One category that seems to be growing is that which features cutesy characters moving through a quest. It's primarily those types of games I'll be discussing this month. However, the first game up is a quest of a somewhat more serious nature.

Mysterium

Asmik for the Game Boy

In this unique title you take on the role of a highly skilled alchemist (a medieval chemist, someone with the ability to transmute base materials into other forms—like lead into gold) summoned to the Mysterium by its caretaker, Morda (an intelligent ant). Pools of fire, water, acid and mercury have been placed throughout the tunnels. Gamers can transmute and create what they will need to complete the quest, in order to solve the mystery of the "Mysterium" and free its denizens from "the grip of the beast."

What's particularly different about this title is the way it's played and how it looks. It's rare that a handheld gaming title tackles a first-person viewpoint in simulated 3-D, but that's just what *Mysterium* does. Your primary viewpoint is from the eyes of your in-game alter-ego. Press the joypad up and you take a step forward, push it down and you step back, left or right turns you in that direction. As you wander through the mazelike passages of the Mysterium, you will find scattered items and the pools you need to transmute what you've collected. Scrolls sometimes give you hints as to what will happen if you put certain items into certain pools. For instance, in the very first part of the game you find a pool of fire, a piece of iron and a scroll telling you that putting the iron in the fire will melt the iron and produce a *glass* key.

As you venture through your quest, you'll collect various items and try to figure out how to use them to aid you in finding your way through the depths of the Mysterium. Along the way you'll encounter unfriendly beasts, who either don't want you to succeed or think you'd make a tasty appetizer. You'll have to evade or fight these dangers off if you wish to continue.

Unfortunately, I haven't yet been able to "crack" *Mysterium*. It's tough to figure out just what to do with each item you have, and if you drop a particular item into the wrong pool, forget it, it's gone. What's particularly notable about this game is its complexity. In addition to the normal "view" of your surroundings, there is also a menu screen from which you can get, drop and examine items, check your stats, consult a map of where you've been, and so forth. A couple of things I didn't appreciate so much were the simplistic graphics (but you have to sacrifice something for pseudo 3-D, right?) and the music. The music is good, but it gets annoying. When you turn it off, all the sound effects go with it.

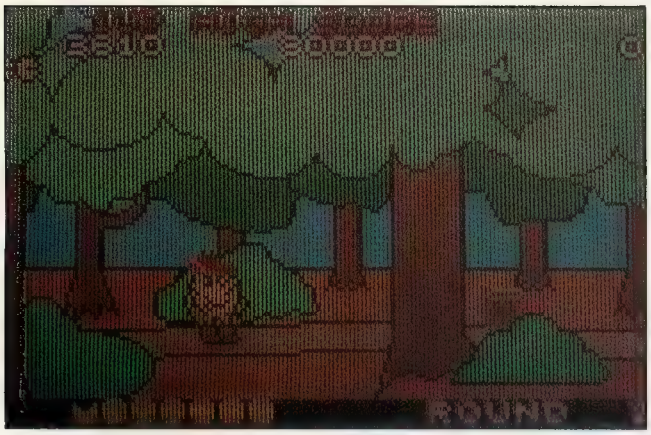
If you're looking for games with "lots and lots of action," keep looking. On the other hand, if you're looking for something a little less shooting-oriented and more of a brain-teaser, you ought to give *Mysterium* a try.

Pac-Land

Atari for the Lynx

Just how many *Pac-Man* variants have there been? Let's see, there was *Pac-Man*, *Ms. Pac-Man*, *Baby Pac-Man*, *Super Pac-Man*, *Pac-Man Plus*, *Pac-Man Jr.* and *Pac-Mania*. Did I miss any? Oops, sure did, the subject of this review: *Pac-Land*.

Pac-Land is *not* a direct sequel to any of the other *Pac*-games listed, rather, it was a spin-off of the late, unlamented *Pac-Man* Saturday morning cartoon, which in turn was a spin-off from the first batch of games. Since its inspiration was a cartoon series, and not just another



Pac-Land *is not a direct sequel to any of the other* **Pac-***titles, but instead is a spin-off of the now defunct Saturday morning cartoon.*

video game, *Pac-Land* doesn't look or play a whole heck of a lot like other *Pac*-titles. The idea of avoiding the ghost monsters is still there, as are the power pellets—which make Pac-Man momentarily capable of devouring his foes—but those are the only real elements held over from the other games. In *Pac-Land* there are no mazes, no dots to eat. Rather, Pac-Man must successfully cross the various sections of *Pac-Land*, displayed as a horizontally scrolling city and country landscapes with multiple levels of depth. His goal? Why, to get the beautiful fairy princess Buttercup past the ghost monsters.

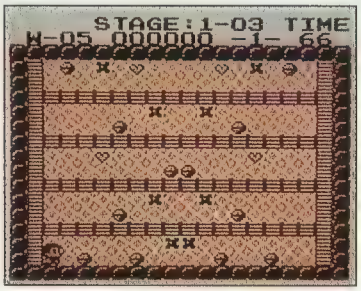
You can make Pac-Man walk, run and jump his way through Pac-Land, but it's not always easy to avoid the ghosts. They come at you on "foot," in cars and buses, in airplanes (dropping itty bitty ghosts like bombs) and even on pogo sticks! When you run, you can outdistance pursuing ghosts, but at such speed you will have a greater risk of running into those ahead. Fortunately, Pac-Man will now have the ability to jump and can leap over opponents and obstacles.

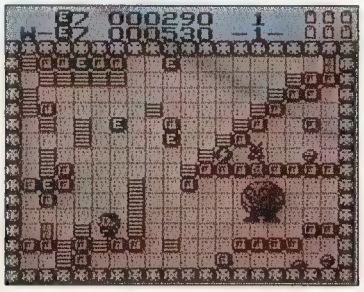
Because I was once an avid *Ms. Pac-Man* player, I've always liked the *Pac*-games, but I've got mixed feelings about this one. The cartoony graphics are a nice change of pace, but the frantic "chase" aspect I enjoy in the other games is lacking. Also, the whole idea of having to help a "beautiful fairy princess" sticks in my craw. It doesn't have any bearing on anything. Still, *Pac-Land* is a nice, playable game worth taking a look at.

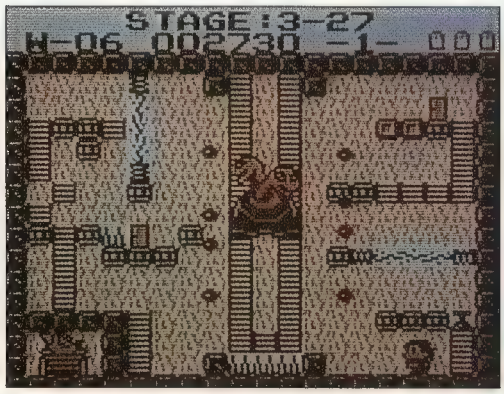
Cyraid

Nexoft (soon to be ASCII Entertainment Software, Inc.) for the Game Boy

The title of the game is actually the name of the fortress of Professor Rogue, who has built an army of robots to carry out his plan of world domination. You are one of the "agents of peace" sent to destroy Rogue and the Cyraid fortress. (Is there a contradiction in that last sentence, or is it just me?) So far, so good, but Rogue has a plan to keep you (and your partner in Game Link mode) at bay; he has taken your mother, Natasia, hostage—oh, no, not *another* helpless female held prisoner! Yes, in two-player mode you and the other player are *brothers.*



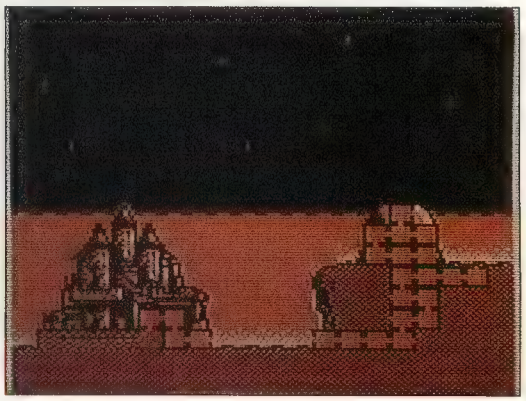




Cyraid *is not an action-packed contest, but it's an interesting intellectual exercise that even those without blinding hand-eye coordination can make their way through.*

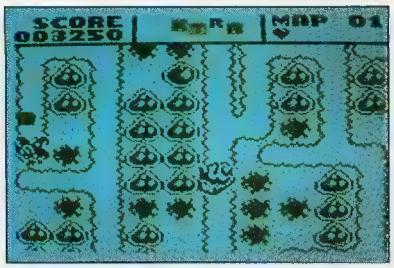
This foolishness aside, *Cyraid* is a pretty neat little game that I enjoyed more than I'd have guessed. Your job is to penetrate each room of the fortress complex in your quest to reach Rogue and save mommy. To clear a room, you must break open all of the energy blocks in it, thus gathering up their energy. Once you've done this, the door to the next room opens.

The challenge is in getting to the energy blocks. You have to climb ladders, smash blocks and use special "magic" doors to go from place to place. While you're doing all of this, you have to avoid contact with the enemies in the room. You have no weapons per se, but you can use items in the room as weapons. You can push and kick blocks and ladder segments, sending them across the screen to bash enemies. Pushing blocks and ladders around is also required to get around the room, and in some rooms you must actually assemble a long ladder by connecting numerous

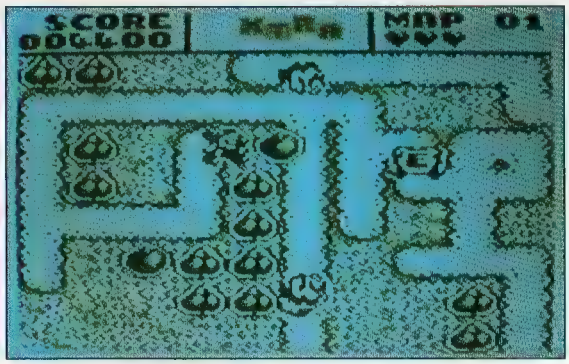


small ladder segments. Each level is something of a puzzle. How do you get from here to there, get the energy blocks and evade the monsters?

Cyraid is not an action-packed contest, but it's an interesting intellectual exercise that even those without blinding hand-eye coordination can make their way through.



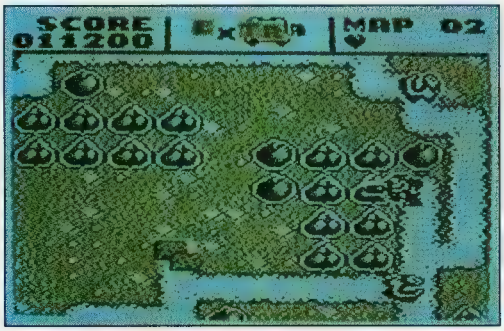
Reminiscent of Dig Dug*'s game play, gamers must tunnel around underground and drop objects on the heads of the ever-pursuing monsters in Ocean's* Mr. Do!



Mr. Do!

Ocean for the Game Boy

Here's another conversion of an older arcade title. *Mr. Do!* is similar to the old arcade favorite *Dig Dug*, in which you control a little guy who tunnels around underground, dropping things on the heads of pursuing monsters. In *Dig Dug* your sole goal was to destroy these monsters. In *Mr. Do!* a *Pac-Man*-like aspect has been added. Picking up all of the cherries on the screen results in the completion of the round. Interestingly, you can complete any level by either getting all the cherries *or* destroying all the monsters; either one will do.



There are both naturally occurring tunnels and those that Mr. Do! makes as he moves about. The monsters—being just that—don't want you to succeed, and any contact with them results in "Mr. Do!" becoming "Mr. Splat!" Mr. Do!'s first line of defense is his "magic ball," which can be flung ahead of our hero. If the ball fails to find any monsters, it comes back for Mr. Do! to catch. If it hits and wipes out some monsters, it vanishes, and a few moments pass before Mr. Do! gets another one. The second line of defense is to move beneath an apple (no, I don't understand why apples and cherries are buried underground) and then tunnel off to one side, leaving the apple to drop on the heads of pursuing monsters, if you time it right. Do it wrong and you could drop it on yourself!

To say *Mr. Do!* is nothing new is stating the obvious, especially when one considers how many eons ago the original game came out. Still, it's a fairly good game, if a bit repetitive. (And, in typing "Mr. Do!" so many times, I think I've just exhausted my annual quota of exclamation marks.)

Sneaky Snakes

Tradewest for the Game Boy

Great title, cute graphics, weird concept, a bear to control.

That was my reaction after my first session with *Sneaky Snakes*. This bizarre little game, in which you take the title role of a slithering reptile, is definitely "different." Your goal is to get your cold-blooded buddy (Can you say "exothermic?" I knew you could!) through each of 16 levels.

Your snake begins his game "life" as a mere head and a single teeny body segment for his body (Are we talking snakes or worms here?). To get a-head in the world (sorry), he has to reach and open the portal elsewhere on the level. That is only possible by eating special goodies that add segments. When the snake's body is long enough, it weighs enough to ring the bell of a special scale that opens the portal. Your snake can slither, jump and swim to get past obstacles and reach goals.

Eating goodies, known as nibbleys, consumes much of your time. The Nibbleys bounce around, and you have to hit them with your forked tongue in order to consume them. Any collision with an enemy creature knocks off one body segment, and when all segments are gone, that snake bites the big one. Fortunately, you can fight off most enemies with multiple lashes of your tongue (yuck!).

Sneaky Snakes can be played by two players via the Game Link, allowing head-to-head competition. Game play is essentially identical to a one-player game, except that whichever player exits the level first gets a bonus. The game seems to be okay, but I found controlling my snake a little harder than I like, and the omnipresent music got on my nerves. Still, it's cute.

Finally, I really hate to beat on a dead horse, but the instructions for this game state that your goal is to clear all 16-levels in order to save poor Sonia Snake. ARRGGHHH!!! When will video-game developers stop using this tired "save the princess" stuff?

Gotta go! So many games, so little time!

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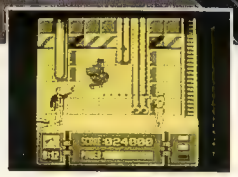

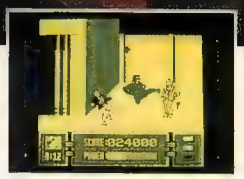

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CIRCLE #138 ON READER SERVICE CARD.

THE BIG BUSINESS OF GAMING—

IS THE INDEPENDENT SOFTWARE PUBLISHER AN ENDANGERED SPECIES?

by Arnie Katz

Writer, editor, lecturer and game designer Arnie Katz knows the field from every perspective. Each month, his column takes readers inside the world of video and computer games. This month Arnie analyzes three major news stories and sees the future of electronic gaming written in the headlines.

Since I spent late February and early March recuperating from an eye operation, I had to forsake my usual pastimes like game playing and reading. It was most likely this electronic-gaming deprivation that made me pay more attention than usual to the news.

There was no shortage of noteworthy stories. Three biggies overshadowed all the others. And as important as they are individually, I believe they are like three pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Considered together, they point to a major change in the business of electronic gaming.

The first one that caught my eye concerns possible infringements on copyrights held by Apple Corporation in conjunction with its Macintosh desktop. Interlocking lawsuits involve Hewlett-Packard, Microsoft and IBM. At stake is nothing less than the legitimacy of the new generation of programs, which includes HP's *New Wave* and Microsoft's *Windows*.

While the actual case is removed from the electronic-gaming world, it reminded me of the rising level of legal activity in the computer- and video-game field. Suits over *Tetris*, Nintendo's efforts to restrain Lewis Galoob Toys'/Camerica's *Game Genie* and the Accolade-Distinctive Software mess suggest that any company that wants to be a major player in electronic gaming in the '90s had better be ready to defend itself in court.

The Cinemaware implosion was the second story. After six months of fast-break expansion, Cinemaware abruptly cut its staff by more than 60% and left the software-publishing business. Did the public suddenly stop loving Cinemaware games? No, of course not.

Cinemaware was one of the industry's leaders in sales per title. It failed not in the stores or on the home-gaming screens, but in the boardroom. The urge to merge caused Cinemaware to greatly expand its R&D during its year-long negotiation with Columbia Pictures. When that deal fell through, Cinemaware entered negotiations with Electronic Arts. That deal's 11th-hour collapse left Cinemaware way out on a limb. Lack of sufficient operating capital left only one option: trim the payroll, license as many properties as possible to other publishers and abandon attempts to sell and market its own wares.

Cinemaware's quest for a well-heeled investor is completely understandable. Either of the abortive deals would have greatly increased Cinemaware's ability to acquire game-worthy pop-cultural licenses. As a member of the Columbia family, Cinemaware would have been able to tap the rich vein of movie licenses. EA's worldwide marketing and distribution clout would have made it possible for Cinemaware to bid higher on available licenses.

The third and final headline of note is the merger between Brøderbund and Sierra. Readily conceding that the Carlstons and the Williamses are outstanding people and credits to the industry, these first families of electronic gaming attempted to join together to ensure survival. The mega-publisher created by this deal could have been tops in entertainment and also a significant leader in both educational gaming and productivity software. Sierra was involved in both CD development and video gaming. Brøderbund and Sierra didn't achieve success by accident. Both managements have repeatedly displayed keen insight into developing industry trends and the flexibility to make adjustments soon enough to remain competitive and profitable. With Electronic Arts and Ocean Software working so closely, Brøderbund and Sierra felt they

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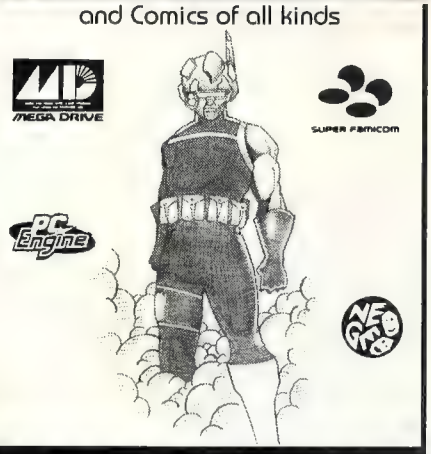

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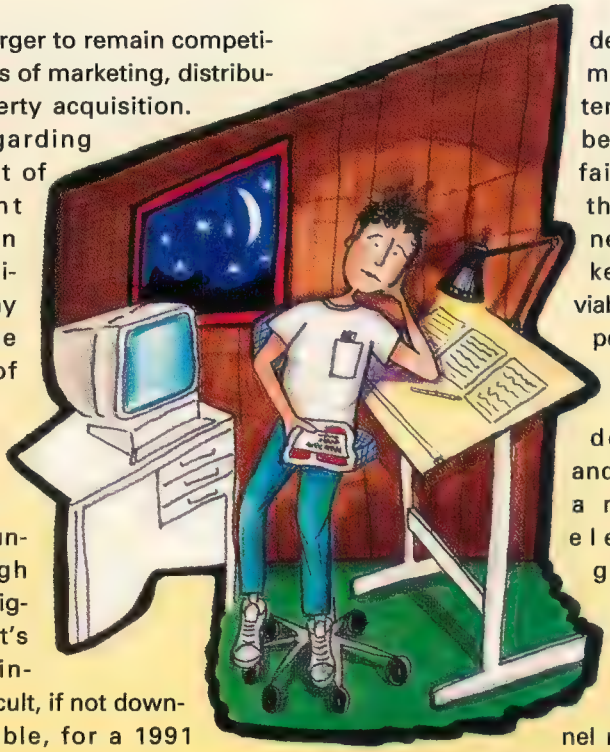
needed the merger to remain competitive in the areas of marketing, distribution and property acquisition. Problems regarding the agreement of management structure within the new consolidated company resulted in the termination of the merger.



By now you've noticed the common thread running through these stories: bigger is better. It's becoming increasingly difficult, if not downright impossible, for a 1991 entrepreneur to follow in the footsteps of the Carlstons or Ken Williams or even Bob Jacob. The cost of entry into the electronic-gaming business is rising rapidly, and there doesn't seem to be any end in sight.

Once upon a time, a bright and enthusiastic software entrepreneur could stick a product in a plastic bag, slap a typewritten label on it and have a reasonably good chance of getting some distribution in computer stores and other outlets. Anyone with a good piece of software could start a game-publishing company in his or her living room on a very modest budget.

Today, few retailers would even consider handling a game packaged in a plastic bag. A colorful box, a promotional campaign and some advertising are now vital to the success of any newly introduced game. Outfits that can't afford this type of support are simply not getting to play. It is inevitable that publishers that can afford the most expensive licenses, the heaviest sales and marketing push and the most outstanding packaging and point-of-sale materials will capture the lion's share of the market.

Electronic-gaming veterans know their industry's history. Hundreds of companies have come and gone, some despite enormous short-term success, because they failed to do the things necessary to keep them viable and competitive.

The rising cost of developing and marketing a major new electronic game puts companies with the financial and personnel resources in the driver's seat. If interactive CD entertainment develops into a mass market as expected, it will put a further premium on bigness. Meanwhile, small publishers with specialty products or very limited catalogs will experience more and more difficulty in getting comprehensive market distribution and adequate retail shelf space.

Look for mergers and buy outs to dominate electronic-gaming business news for the next several years. Virtually every electronic-entertainment software publisher will be part of a media conglomerate, movie company or print empire by the mid-'90s. Few independent software publishers will survive without at least a strong affiliate deal with one of the majors.

Hollywood will replace the nation's garages and dens as the cradle of new software companies. The bigger electronic gaming gets, the more media giants in allied fields will want to get into ours.

Is this the end of the American software dream? It isn't really dead, just in suspended animation for a while. When and if electronic gaming grows into a true mass-entertainment market, a new generation of small publishers will appear to meet the special needs of key segments of the total gaming audience.

The situation in the gaming industry may become analogous to that of the comic book business. Marvel and DC use their immense marketing clout to blast rival publishers of superhero and adventure comic books off the newsstand. Just as these two goliaths were poised to carve up the comic-book business, the so-called ground-level publishers popped into existence. Denied the newsstand, they settled for what was then a mere handful of comic-book stores. Now that such speciality shops account for at least half of all comic-book sales, the leading producers of ground-level comics have become multimillion-dollar operations.

The same could happen in electronic gaming. The chain software stores of the future, prospecting for unusual and distinctive items to appeal to their best customers, are likely to turn to small publishers for those out-of-the-ordinary, special games.

But all that takes place the day after tomorrow. For now, get ready to enjoy the benefits and curse the deficiencies of big-time entertainment software publishing.

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PREANNIVERSARY CLEAN-UP Q&As!

by the Game Doctor

Game Doc Central is a riot of activity as thousands of workers prepare for next month's special tenth-anniversary column! That's right, next month's issue of VIDEOGAMES & COMPUTER ENTERTAINMENT will represent the Doc's tenth year of providing sometimes satisfactory answers to your increasingly penetrating queries. In order to celebrate (in addition to the Superdome festivities, the new Game Doctor balloon for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade and the TV special, of course) *every* petitioner who has a letter published in the next column will receive a Game Doctor Prize Packet of useless promotional material from the world of interactive gaming.

Meanwhile, as the staff here readies the office for the arrival of the TV cameras and while our new Game Nurse Becky (anybody remember the name of our last Game Nurse? A Special Game Packet to the first correct answer!) is busy assembling Prize Packets for next month's monumental occasion, VG&CE and I thought this would be a great opportunity to fit in some great Qs, which were squeezed out of the last few columns as a result of space limitations. Take it away!

question

Over the past two to three years I have noticed an advancement in Nintendo cartridges. Since I first purchased my NES, games have gotten longer and some great graphics have accompanied more recent carts.

Now, getting to my question, I recently purchased a Genesis system and was wondering if the system could one day advance as much as the NES. Also, why is it that the NES has gotten so strong? Did it always have these capabilities?

—David Brinkman
Chicago, Illinois

answer

Several things explain the improvement in the NES. First, any system that remains popular over a period of several years sees an evolutionary improvement in its software. Look at the early games for the Atari 2600 (VCS), a system that was basically designed to play *Pong*-style games. Then look at the amazing stuff that companies like Absolute Entertainment produce for it today. As developers gain more experience and build better tools, it's only natural that the games they produce for any given system will become more and more sophisticated.

The other reason for the upgrade is improved technology. The NES, for example, has seen the development of several new chips that greatly enhance its system's visual capabilities. But here's a formula for you: Increased Memory = Increased $.

The more memory that's packed into a game cartridge, the more expensive that game is going to be, and video games are already pushing the upper limits of consumer tolerance. Certainly Genesis games will look better as time goes on and developers gain more experience and make use of those superior tools, but as for the amount of extra memory that can be loaded into the software, that is a tougher problem to lick.

question

I am writing this letter to ask advice on my future purchase of a personal computer. My limited contact in the gaming genre is my NES, which I enjoy very much; I love the games, and they have given me hours of enjoyment. Now I am ready to advance my game playing.

I have done considerable research into my future purchase, reading your magazine every month from cover to cover and doing some outside reading on computers and, quite frankly, it can be confusing. At one time, I was going to buy a Genesis, but my wife's going to enroll in college, and I thought that I could please both of us by buying a home computer. She could do her school papers and research, while I would be able to play games with the depth, complexity and superior graphics that I am looking for.

The problem is, what to buy? Since I consider this an investment, I want to do it right. A computer-enthusiast friend of mine suggested the 386SX. He says it's not too much or too little for our use, but at around $2,000 for a system, I don't want to get one when I could get a 286 for a lot less and be just as happy. I know that I want [the system] to be IBM-compatible, have VGA graphics comparable to a 16-bit game machine or even better and the fluidity of movement that would make the games complete.

I'm willing to pay more money in order to get what I'm looking for, but if I can save some of my hard-earned money, I would appreciate your help. I also know that you can't tell me what to buy, but any help would be greatly appreciated!

—Troy Bateman
Ft. Collins, Colorado

answer

As long as the ground rules have been so clearly established, I think I

can give you some helpful advice, Troy. From the description of your needs, I doubt very much that you'd be "just as happy" with a 286/12MhZ PC system. For one thing, many games have to be run at slower speeds, and background graphics have to be eliminated in order to run others on 286 machines.

In addition to a VGA monitor, you will also want a joystick and card, a sound system of some sort (Soundblaster, Ad Lib, Roland, etc.) and a hard drive. The hard drive is crucial because VGA games can take up tremendous amounts of disk space. Companies like Sierra, Access and Dynamix have produced VGA games requiring ten or more disks, and believe me, that much disk switching will quickly ruin a game.

question

I own a Genesis [and] one day when I was playing *Super Hang-On*, I removed the game while the power was on and inserted *Revenge of Shinobi*. To my amazement, the title screen read: "The Super Shinobi"! I pressed **START** and—voilà!—I had obtained 99 men and 899 throwing stars! I tried inserting other games, removing them and putting new games in. Each game had a unique result (although not all games changed): 99 men, extra hard difficulty, Japanese title screens, etc. I thought all this was great until I read that doing these kinds of tricks can seriously damage the Genesis.

One more thing: Tell me what the heck that slot in the lower right side of my Genesis is for. The reason I'm asking is because I touched my *Ghouls 'n' Ghosts* game chip to the silver thing (after the red cover is taken off there is a silver thing), and my game was erased.

—Steve Verrastro
Port Chester, New York

answer

The trick you discovered can be a dangerous one, Steve, for both your Genesis *and* the game cartridges. Now I may be an old fuddy-duddy, but from my very first day in Medi-Game School (I graduated from the University of Bally at Midway, by the way) they taught me two things:

- Never *remove* a cartridge from a machine with the power still on.
- Never *insert* a cartridge into a machine with the power still on.

Since your trick—while undeniably clever—violates *both* those rules, I'd be careful of doing this again in the future if I were you. After all, one fried game cart should be enough for a while.

Speaking of that fried cartridge, didn't you notice that the "red thing" you removed had the message "Do Not Remove" inscribed on it in large letters? It's my guess this is one of those slots that video-game hardware designers include on machines as inputs for future peripherals. It may have been energized, however, hence your disappearing program.

By the way, Steve, thanks for the photo of the dismantled cartridge; that was something my collection was missing.

question

I've had an Apple IIgs for four years, and I'd like to know what's happened to the production of software for it? The IIgs is supposed to be one of the best computers today, isn't it? I go into a software store, and there are only one or two shelves of Apple II software; the rest is filled with IBM. Same with the game-review section of your magazine (which is a very good column).

—Ryan Kamins
Northridge, California

answer

Bad news about the IIgs, Ryan. It hasn't made it. There are two basic reasons why there is so little software for this computer:

1. The computer proved extremely difficult to produce games on, which meant that every IIgs edition requires a major commitment of time and money on the part of publishers.

2. The demise of the entire Apple II line. Since the IIgs was downwardly compatible, it benefitted from the huge library of Apple II software when it was first released. These days most distributors don't want to mess with Apple II software, so the publishers don't produce any, which means there's nothing in the stores and hence, nothing for VG&CE to review.

question

I think Sega has a winner with its new Game Gear handheld system. From all I can tell from VG&CE, the Game Gear's graphics look clearer and crisper than Atari's Lynx system. Is this possible? Isn't the Lynx' 16-bit system more powerful than the Game Gear's 8-bit system? Or is the Game Gear also a 16-bit system?

—James Freeport
Worcester, Massachusetts

answer

Having played extensively with the Lynx and having tested the Game Gear at CES for over an hour, I'd have to say the graphics are pretty comparable, with a slight edge going to the Game Gear. However, neither system uses a 16-bit CPU. The Lynx uses a backlit liquid crystal display (LCD) that is capable of producing 16 (out of 4,096) colors simultaneously with 160 x 102 pixel resolution. The processing speed is quite fast—16 MHz. The Lynx has 64K of internal RAM, and the software cards can hold up to 16 megabits (not megabytes) of data. The Game Gear uses a backlighting LCD technology similar to the Lynx's and boasts a slightly improved graphic resolution of 160 x 146 pixels. The Game Gear has the same number of total colors as the Lynx, but can display 32 of them simultaneously.

Remember, when the numbers are this close, the software is the true tie-breaker.

And that's it. The final chapter closes on the Doc's first decade. Be here next month for the dawn of the second! Aloha!

Remember, send those questions, comments and corrections to ***Game Doctor*, 330 S. Decatur, Suite 152, Las Vegas, NV 89107.**

continued from page 49

For me, the best part of *Spider-Man Vs. The Kingpin* is the feeling of having assumed the web-slinger's identity and facing all of the dangers associated with that role—right in the comfort of my own home. At one point early in the game, I found myself crawling on the ceiling of a warehouse, and my thumb started to ache because I had just realized that if I let go of that "C" button, even for a split-second, I would lose my grip and plummet straight down into a snarling pit of rabid German shepherds and bloodthirsty hoodlums with pistols and switchblades. That's exactly the kind of thrill I expect from this type of video game—whoa, my spider sense is tingling again!

—C. B.

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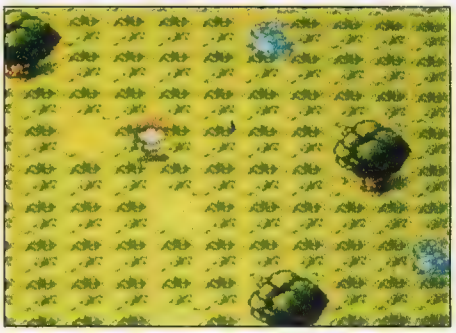
OVERALL	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	**8**	9	10

Magic, monsters, battles and quests—all essential ingredients for a fantasy role-playing game. These are ingredients that abound in *Faria*, fortunately! When I received this cart, I expected a couple of things from the same company that did the *Wizardry* translation—a good challenge and a solid game. I wasn't disappointed.

Every quest has a story behind it, and this one isn't any different. The land of Faria was once troubled by a seemingly invincible evil wizard, who tortured the people and the land. Other magicians loyal to the King of Faria created a dragon through magic and had the dragon defeat the cruel wizard. The king then had the wizard imprisoned within a magic sword, but warned that if he ever escaped, only a foreigner would be able to defeat him. Time passed and peace prevailed, but once again evil creeps forth—and luckily a stranger has just made an appearance.

As the stranger in Faria, you go before the king, who asks that you go on a quest in search of his daughter, who has been kidnapped. Sounds like a fairly straightforward plot so far, but not so fast. Unlike many other adventures, this first quest is just that, the first of many that you will have to undertake in order to save Faria from the evil that threatens it. After rescuing his daughter, the king throws a party, but somebody poisons the caviar, so you must search for a cure. Once you have saved the populous from poison, the king himself is threatened and your quests continue.



Faria covers a wide area, with several continents, caves, lakes, forests and towers to be explored. Many weapons, armor, magic, potions and objects must be found and properly used. There are many shopkeepers and townspeople to be questioned. Many of the items aren't simply bought—clues given occasionally by the inhabitants of Faria lead to many important items. Basically, we are talking adventure on a large scale here.

As you roam about this landscape, random encounters are frequent. While it might seem quicker to just move straight through a forest rather than going around, just remember that the big guys like to hide out there and have healthy appetites for strangers.

Strategy is much more important than a quick sword in figuring out the many puzzles that will present themselves throughout the course of the game. The skill of accurate mapmaking is essential for progress in the towers and caves you'll come across.

Your character's statistics are fairly simple. Offensive and defensive abilities are based on your weapons and armor respectively, with experience points determining how high your maximum hit points progress. Your character may carry more and more items as his levels hit points increase.

As far as the meat of the game goes, everything is pretty good. The windowing features found in *Wizardry* are also present here, making everything easy to manipulate. The quests are challenging— difficult without being excessive—and keep you interested. Graphics and sound aren't incredible, but they get you by well enough.

Faria has a battery backup, so progress may be saved in several areas of the game using the normal methods of holding in **RESET** before powering down. If you die and haven't saved, don't worry. Unlimited lives are available, and you are placed back in the last place you saved, though perhaps minus gold and some items.

What really makes *Faria* attractive is the way the quests are set up. They proceed logically from one another, and each builds upon the progress you have already made, with much crisscrossing of the land necessary as you visit and revisit places as new information is presented. I would definitely recommend *Faria* for adventure gamers looking for a fresh challenge.

—B. W.

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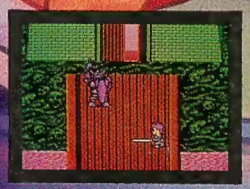

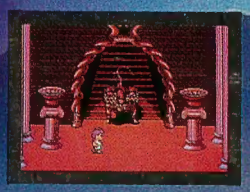

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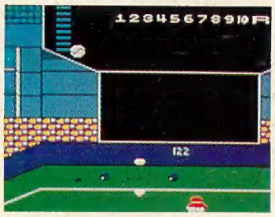

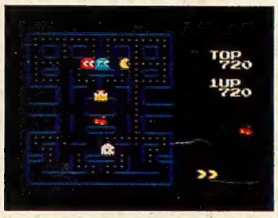

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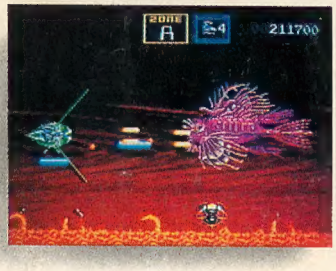

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